REFERENCE LIBRARY

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

(HANSARD)

SIXTH SERIES—VOLUME 207

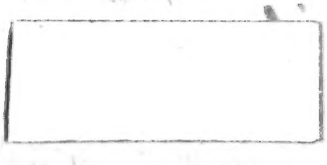
HOUSE OF COMMONS

OFFICIAL REPORT

FIRST SESSION OF THE FIFTY-FIRST PARLIAMENT
OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN
AND NORTHERN IRELAND
FORTY-FIRST YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SESSION 1992-93

COMPRISING PERIOD
27 April—15 May 1992



328.42
REFERENCE LIBRARY
06 OCT 1992

no spine label

CAMBRIDGESHIRE
LIBRARIES
REFERENCE
AND
INFORMATION
SERVICE
CAMBRIDGE
REFERENCE LIBRARY
LIBRARY

ISBN 0 10 681207 6

Chronology of "The Parliamentary Debates"

The Parliamentary History contains all that can be collected of the Legislative History of this country from the Conquest to the close of the XVIIIth Century (1803), 36 vols. The chief sources whence these Debates are derived are the Constitutional History, 24 vols.; Sir Simonds D'Ewes' Journal; Debates of the Commons in 1620 and 1621; Chandler and Timberland's Debates, 22 vols.; Grey's Debates of the Commons, from 1667 to 1694, 10 vols.; Almons Debates, 24 vols.; Debrett's Debates, 63 vols.; The Hardwicke Papers; Debates in Parliament by Dr. Johnson, &c. &c.

THE PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES commenced with the year 1803, and the contents are set forth in the following Chronological Table:—

HISTORY

CONQUEST TO 34 GEO. II.—1066 to 1760

Vol. 1 to 15. 1 Will. I to 34 Geo. II

1066-1760

REIGN OF GEO. III.—1760 to 1820

Vol. 15 to 35. Geo. III to 40 Geo. III.

1760—1800

PARLIAMENTS OF UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND

(First Parliament)

Vol.	35	41	Geo. III.	1801
—	36	42	—	1802

(Second Parliament)

Vol.	36	42	Geo. III.	1802-3

DEBATES

First Series

(Second Parliament—*cont.*)

Vol.	1 & 2	44	Geo. III.	1803-4
—	3 to 5	45	—	1805
—	6 & 7	46	—	1806

(Third Parliament)

Vol.	8 & 9	47	Geo. III.	1806-7

(Fourth Parliament)

Vol.	9 to 11	48	Geo. III.	1807-8
—	12—14	49	—	1809
—	15—17	50	—	1810
—	18—20	51	—	1810-11
—	21—23	52	—	1812

(Fifth Parliament)

Vol.	24 to 26	53	Geo. III.	1812-13
—	27 & 28	54	—	1813-14
—	29 to 31	55	—	1814-15
—	32—34	56	—	1816
—	35 & 36	58	—	1817
—	37—38	58	—	1818

(Sixth Parliament)

Vol.	39 & 40	59	Geo III.	1819
—	41	60	—	1819-20

Second Series

REIGN OF GEO. IV.—1820 to 1830

(Seventh Parliament)

Vol.	1 to 3	1	Geo. IV.	1820
—	4 & 5	2	—	1821
—	6— 7	3	—	1822
—	8— 9	4	—	1823
—	10—11	5	—	1824
—	12—13	6	—	1825-6
—	14—15	7	—	1826

(Eighth Parliament)

Vol.	16	7	Geo. IV.	1826
—	17	8	—	1827
—	18 & 19	9	—	1828
—	20—21	10	—	1829
—	22 to 25	11	—	1830

Third Series

REIGN OF WILLIAM IV.—1830 to 1837

(Ninth Parliament)

Vol.	1 to 3	1	Will. IV.	1830-1

(Tenth Parliament)

Vol.	4 to 8	2	Will. IV.	1831
—	9—14	3	—	1832

(Eleventh Parliament)

Vol.	15 to 20	4	Will. IV.	1833
—	21—25	5	—	1834

(Twelfth Parliament)

Vol.	26 to 30	6	Will. IV.	1835
—	31—35	7	—	1836
—	36—38	8	—	1837

REIGN OF VICTORIA.—1837 to 1901

(Thirteenth Parliament)

Vol.	39 to 44	1	Victoria	1838
—	45—50	2	—	1839
—	51—55	3	—	1840
—	56—58	4	—	(a)1841

(Fourteenth Parliament)

Vol.	59	4	Victoria	(b)1841
—	60 to 65	5	—	1842
—	66—71	6	—	1843
—	72—76	7	—	1844
—	77—82	8	—	1845
—	83—88	9	—	1846
—	89—94	10	—	(a)1847

(Fifteenth Parliament)

Vol.	95	10	Victoria	(b)1847
—	96—101	11	—	1848
—	102—107	12	—	1849
—	108—113	13	—	1850
—	114—118	14	—	1851
—	119—122	15	—	(a)1852

(Sixteenth Parliament)

Vol.	123	15	Victoria	(b)1852
—	124 to 129	16	—	1853
—	130—135	17	—	1854
—	136—139	18	—	1855
—	140—143	19	—	1856
—	144	20	—	(a)1857

(SEVENTEENTH PARLIAMENT)

Vol.	145 to 147	20	VICTORIA	....(b)1857
—	148—151	21	—	 1858
—	152 & 153	22	—	....(a)1859

(EIGHTEENTH PARLIAMENT)

Vol.	154 & 155	22	VICTORIA	....(b)1859
—	156 to 160	23	—	 1860
—	161—164	24	—	 1861
—	165—168	25	—	 1862
—	169—172	26	—	 1863
—	173—176	27	—	 1864
—	177—180	28	—	 1865

(NINETEENTH PARLIAMENT)

Vol.	181 to 184	29	VICTORIA	 1866
—	185—189	30	—	 1867
—	190—193	31	—	 1867-8

(TWENTIETH PARLIAMENT)

Vol.	194 to 198	32	VICTORIA	 1868-9
—	199—203	33	—	 1870
—	204—208	34	—	 1871
—	209—213	35	—	 1872
—	214—217	36	—	 1873

(TWENTY-FIRST PARLIAMENT)

Vol.	218 to 221	37	VICTORIA	 1874
—	222—226	38	—	 1875
—	227—231	39	—	 1876
—	232—236	40	—	 1877
—	237—243	41	—	 1878
—	242—249	42	—	 1878-9
—	250 & 251	43	—	....(a)1880

(TWENTY-SECOND PARLIAMENT)

Vol.	252 to 256	43	VICTORIA	....(b)1880
—	257—265	44	—	 1881
—	266—273	45	—	....(a)1882
—	274 & 275	45	—	....(b)1882
—	276 to 283	46	—	 1883
—	284—292	47	—	 1884
—	293—301	48	—	 1884-5

(TWENTY-THIRD PARLIAMENT)

Vol.	302 to 307	49	VICTORIA	 1886

(TWENTY-FOURTH PARLIAMENT)

Vol.	308 & 309	49	VICTORIA	....(b)1886
—	310 to 321	50	—	 1887
—	322—332	51	—	 1888
—	333—340	52	—	 1889
—	341—348	53	—	 1890
—	349—356	54	—	 1890-1

Fourth Series

(TWENTY-FOURTH PARLIAMENT—*cont.*)

Vol.	1 to 6	55	VICTORIA	 1892

(TWENTY-FIFTH PARLIAMENT)

Vol.	7	56	VICTORIA	 1892
—	8 to 21	57	—	 1893-4
—	22—29	57	—	 1894
—	30—35	58	—	 1895

(TWENTY-SIXTH PARLIAMENT)

Vol.	36	59	VICTORIA	 1895
—	37 to 44	59	—	 1895-6
—	45—52	60	—	 1897
—	53—65	61	—	 1898
—	66—76	62	—	 1899
—	77	63	—	 1899
—	78—83	63	—	 1900
—	84	63 & 64	—	 1900
—	85—87	64	—	 1900

(TWENTY-SEVENTH PARLIAMENT)

Vol.	88	65	VICTORIA	 1900

REIGN OF EDWARD VII.—1901 to 1910

(TWENTY-SEVENTH PARLIAMENT—*cont.*)

Vol.	89	1	EDWARD VII.	 1901
—	90 to 100	1	—	 1901
—	101	1 & 2	—	 1902
—	102—117	2	—	 1902
—	118—128	3	—	 1903
—	129—140	4	—	 1904
—	141—151	5	—	 1905

(TWENTY-EIGHTH PARLIAMENT)

Vol.	152 to 168	6	EDWARD VII.	 1906
—	169—182	7	—	 1907
—	183—199	8	—	 1908

Fifth Series—Official Report

Lords Debates

(TWENTY-EIGHTH PARLIAMENT—*cont.*)

Vol.	1 to 4	9	EDWARD VII.	 1909

(TWENTY-NINTH PARLIAMENT)

Vol.	5 & 6	10	EDWARD VII. and 1 GEO. V.	 1910

Commons Debates

(TWENTY-EIGHTH PARLIAMENT—*cont.*)

Vol.	1 to 13	9	EDWARD VII.	 1909

(TWENTY-NINTH PARLIAMENT)

Vol.	14 to 20	10	EDWARD VII. and 1 GEO. V.	 1910

REIGN OF GEORGE V.—1910 to 1936

Lords Debates

(THIRTIETH PARLIAMENT)

Vol.	7 to 10	1 & 2	GEO. V.	 1911
—	11—13	2—3	—	1912-13
—	14	3—4	—	 1913
—	15—17	4—5	—	 1914
—	18—20	5—6	—	1914-16
—	21—23	6—7	—	 1916
—	24—28	7—8	—	 1917
—	29—32	8—9	—	 1918

Commons Debates

(THIRTIETH PARLIAMENT)

Vol.	21 to 33	1 & 2	GEO. V.	 1911
—	34— 49	2—3	—	 1912
—	50— 57	3—4	—	 1913
—	58— 67	4—5	—	 1914
—	68— 79	5—6	—	1914-16
—	80— 88	6—7	—	 1916
—	89—102	7—8	—	 1917
—	103—111	8—9	—	 1918

Lords Debates				*Commons Debates*			
(THIRTY-FIRST PARLIAMENT)				(THIRTY-FIRST PARLIAMENT)			
Vol.	33 to 38	9 & 10 GEO. V.	1919	Vol.	112 to 124	9 & 10 GEO. V.	1919
—	39—43	10—11 —	1920	—	125—140	10—11 —	1920-21
—	44—47	11—12 —	1921	—	141—148	11—12 —	1921
—	48 (2nd Session)	12 —	1921	—	149 (2nd Session)	12 —	1921
—	49—51	12—13 —	1922	—	150—158	12—13 —	1922
(THIRTY-SECOND PARLIAMENT)				(THIRTY-SECOND PARLIAMENT)			
Vol.	52 to 55	13 & 14 GEO. V.	1922-23	Vol.	159 to 168	13 & 14 GEO. V.	1922-23
(THIRTY-THIRD PARLIAMENT)				(THIRTY-THIRD PARLIAMENT)			
Vol.	56 to 59	14 & 15 GEO. V.	1924	Vol.	169 to 178	14 & 15 GEO. V.	1924

PARLIAMENT OF UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND

(THIRTY-FOURTH PARLIAMENT)				(THIRTY-FOURTH PARLIAMENT)			
Vol.	60 to 62	15 & 16 GEO. V.	1924-25	Vol.	179 to 190	15 & 16 GEO. V.	1924-25
—	63—65	16—17 —	1926	—	191—201	16—17 —	1926
—	66—69	17—18 —	1927	—	202—212	17—18 —	1927
—	70 & 71	18—19 —	1928	—	213—221	18—19 —	1928
—	72 to 74	19—29 —	1928-29	—	222—228	19—20 —	1928-29
(THIRTY-FIFTH PARLIAMENT)				(THIRTY-FIFTH PARLIAMENT)			
Vol.	75 to 78	20 & 21 GEO. V.	1929-30	Vol.	229 to 243	20 & 21 GEO. V.	1929-30
—	79—82	21—22 —	1930-31	—	244—258	21—22 —	1930-31
(THIRTY-SIXTH PARLIAMENT)				(THIRTY-SIXTH PARLIAMENT)			
Vol.	83 to 85	22 & 23 GEO. V.	1931-32	Vol.	259 to 271	22 & 23 GEO. V.	1931-32
—	86—89	23—24 —	1932-33	—	272—282	23—24 —	1932-33
—	90—94	24—25 —	1933-34	—	283—294	24—25 —	1933-34
—	95—98	25—26 —	1934-35	—	295—306	25—26 —	1934-35
(THIRTY-SEVENTH PARLIAMENT)				(THIRTY-SEVENTH PARLIAMENT)			
Vol.	99	26 GEO. V. and EDWARD VIII.	1935-36	Vol.	307	26 GEO. V.	1935-36

REIGN OF EDWARD VIII.—1936

Lords Debates				*Commons Debates*			
(THIRTY-SEVENTH PARLIAMENT—*cont.*)				(THIRTY-SEVENTH PARLIAMENT—*cont.*)			
Vol.	99 to 102	EDWARD VIII.	1936	Vol.	308 to 316	EDWARD VIII.	1936
—	103	—	1936-37	—	317	—	1936-37

REIGN OF GEORGE VI.—1936 to 1952

Lords Debates				*Commons Debates*			
(THIRTY-SEVENTH PARLIAMENT—*cont.*)				(THIRTY-SEVENTH PARLIAMENT—*cont.*)			
Vol.	104 to 106	1 GEO. VI.	1936-37	Vol.	318 to 327	1 GEO. VI.	1936-37
—	107—110	1 & 2 —	1936-38	—	328—340	1 & 2 —	1937-38
—	111—114	2—3 —	1938-39	—	341—354	2—3 —	1938-39
—	115—117	3—4 —	1939-40	—	355—366	3—4 —	1939-40
—	118—120	4—5 —	1940-41	—	367—375	4—5 —	1940-41
—	121—124	5—6 —	1941-42	—	376—384	5—6 —	1941-42
—	125—129	6—7 —	1942-43	—	385—394	6—7 —	1942-43
—	130—133	7—8 —	1943-44	—	395—405	7—8 —	1943-44
—	134—136	8—9 —	1944-45	—	406—412	8—9 —	1944-45
(THIRTY-EIGHTH PARLIAMENT)				(THIRTY-EIGHTH PARLIAMENT)			
Vol.	137 to 143	9 & 10 GEO. VI.	1945-46	Vol.	413 to 429	9 & 10 GEO. VI.	1945-46
—	144—151	10—11 —	1946-47	—	430—442	10—11 —	1946-47
—	152—158	11—12 —	1947-48	—	443—456	11—12 —	1947-48
—	159—165	12—14 —	1948-49	—	457—471	12—14 —	1948-49
(THIRTY-NINTH PARLIAMENT)				(THIRTY-NINTH PARLIAMENT)			
Vol.	166 to 168	14 GEO. VI.	1950	Vol.	472 to 479	14 GEO. VI.	1950
—	169—173	14 & 15 —	1950-51	—	480—492	14 & 15 —	1950-51
(FORTIETH PARLIAMENT)				(FORTIETH PARLIAMENT)			
Vol.	174	15 & 16 GEO. VI. and 1 ELIZ. II.	1951-52	Vol.	493 to 495	15 & 16 GEO. VI. and 1 ELIZ. II.	1951-52

REIGN OF ELIZABETH II.—1952 to

Lords Debates				*Commons Debates*			
	(FORTIETH PARLIAMENT—*cont.*)				(FORTIETH PARLIAMENT—*cont.*)		
Vol.	174 to 178	1 ELIZ. II.	1952	Vol.	495 to 506	1 ELIZ. II.	1952
—	179—183	1 & 2 —	1952-53	—	507—519	1 & 2 —	1952-53
—	184—189	2—3 —	1953-54	—	520—534	2—3 —	1953-54
—	190—192	3—4 —	1954-55	—	535—541	3—4 —	1954-55
	(FORTY-FIRST PARLIAMENT)				(FORTY-FIRST PARLIAMENT)		
Vol.	193 to 199	4 & 5 ELIZ. II.	1955-56	Vol.	542 to 559	4 & 5 ELIZ. II.	1955-56
—	200—205	5—6 —	1956-57	—	560—576	5—6 —	1956-57
—	206—211	6—7 —	1957-58	—	577—593	6—7 —	1957-58
—	212—218	7—8 —	1958-59	—	594—611	7—8 —	1958-59
	(FORTY-SECOND PARLIAMENT)				(FORTY-SECOND PARLIAMENT)		
Vol.	219 to 225	8 & 9 ELIZ. II.	1959-60	Vol.	612 to 628	8 & 9 ELIZ. II.	1959-60
—	226—234	9—10 —	1960-61	—	629—647	9—10 —	1960-61
—	235—243	10—11 —	1961-62	—	648—665	10—11 —	1961-62
—	244—252	11—12 —	1962-63	—	666—683	11—12 —	1962-63
—	253—260	12—13 —	1963-64	—	684—700	12—13 —	1963-64
	(FORTY-THIRD PARLIAMENT)				(FORTY-THIRD PARLIAMENT)		
Vol.	261 to 269	13 & 14 ELIZ. II.	1964-65	Vol.	701 to 719	13 & 14 ELIZ. II.	1964-65
—	270—273	14—15 —	1965-66	—	720—726	14—15 —	1965-66
	(FORTY-FOURTH PARLIAMENT)				(FORTY-FOURTH PARLIAMENT)		
Vol.	274 to 285	15 & 16 ELIZ. II.	1966-67	Vol.	727 to 752	15 & 16 ELIZ. II.	1966-67
—	286—296	16—17 —	1967-68	—	753—769	16—17 —	1967-68
—	297—304	17—18 —	1968-69	—	770—789	17—18 —	1968-69
—	305—310	18—19 —	1969-70	—	790—802	18—19 —	1969-70
	(FORTY-FIFTH PARLIAMENT)				(FORTY-FIFTH PARLIAMENT)		
Vol.	311 to 324	19 & 20 ELIZ. II.	1970-71	Vol.	803 to 824	19 & 20 ELIZ. II.	1970-71
—	325—335	20—21 —	1971-72	—	825—844	20—21 —	1971-72
—	336—345	21—22 —	1972-73	—	845—862	21—22 —	1972-73
—	346—349	22—23 —	1973-74	—	863—869	22—23 —	1973-74
	(FORTY-SIXTH PARLIAMENT)				(FORTY-SIXTH PARLIAMENT)		
Vol.	350 to 353	23 ELIZ. II.	1974	Vol.	870 to 879	23 ELIZ. II.	1974
	(FORTY-SEVENTH PARLIAMENT)				(FORTY-SEVENTH PARLIAMENT)		
Vol.	354 to 365	23 & 24 ELIZ. II.	1974-75	Vol.	880 to 900	23 & 24 ELIZ. II.	1974-75
—	366—377	24—25 —	1975-76	—	901—920	24—25 —	1975-76
—	378—386	25—26 —	1976-77	—	921—937	25—26 —	1976-77
—	387—395	26—27 —	1977-78	—	938—956	26—27 —	1977-78
—	396—399	27—28 —	1978-79	—	957—966	27—28 —	1978-79
	(FORTY-EIGHTH PARLIAMENT)				(FORTY-EIGHTH PARLIAMENT)		
Vol.	400 to 414	28 & 29 ELIZ. II.	1979-80	Vol.	967 to 993	28 & 29 ELIZ. II.	1979-80
—	415—424	29 & 30 —	1980-81	—	994—1000	29 & 30 —	1980-81
—	425—435	30 & 31 —	1981-82		*Sixth Series*		
—	436—442	31 & 32 —	1982-83	Vol.	1 to 12	30 ELIZ. II.	1980-81
	(FORTY-NINTH PARLIAMENT)			—	13—30	30 & 31 —	1981-82
Vol.	443 to 456	32 & 33 ELIZ. II.	1983-84	—	31—43	31 & 32 —	1982-83
—	457—467	33 & 34 —	1984-85		(FORTY-NINTH PARLIAMENT)		
—	468—481	34 & 35 —	1985-86	Vol.	44 to 66	32 & 33 ELIZ. II.	1983-84
—	482—487	35 & 36 —	1986-87	—	67—85	33 & 34 —	1984-85
	(FIFTIETH PARLIAMENT)			—	86—104	34 & 35 —	1985-86
Vol.	488 to 501	36 & 37 ELIZ. II.	1987-88	—	105—117	35 & 36 —	1986-87
—	502—512	37 & 38 —	1988-89		(FIFTIETH PARLIAMENT)		
—	513—522	38 & 39 —	1989-90	Vol.	118 to 141	36 & 37 ELIZ. II.	1987-88
—	523—531	39 & 40 —	1990-91	—	142—161	37 & 38 —	1988-89
—	532—536	40 & 41 —	1991-92	—	162—179	38 & 39 —	1989-90
				—	180—197	39 & 40 —	1990-91
				—	198—206	40 & 41 —	1991-92

House of Commons

Alphabetical List of Members

[Returned at the General Election, 9 April 1992]

A

Abbott, Ms. Diane Julie (Hackney North and Stoke Newington)
Adams, Mrs. Katherine (Paisley, North)
Adley, Robert James (Christchurch)
Ainger, Nicholas Richard (Pembroke)
Ainsworth, Peter Michael (East Surrey)
Ainsworth, Robert William (Coventry, North East)
Aitken, Jonathan William Patrick (Thanet, South)
Alexander, Richard Thain (Newark)
Alison, Rt. Hon. Michael James Hugh (Selby)
Allason, Rupert William Simon (Torbay)
Allen, Graham William (Nottingham, North)
Alton, David Patrick Paul (Liverpool, Mossley Hill)
Amess, David Anthony Andrew (Basildon)
Ancram, Michael (Devizes)
Anderson, Donald (Swansea, East)
Anderson, Janet (Rossendale and Darwen)
Arbuthnot, James Norwich (Wanstead and Woodford)
Armstrong, Ms. Hilary Jane (North West Durham)
Arnold, Jacques Arnold (Gravesham)
Arnold, Sir Thomas Richard (Hazel Grove)
Ashby, David Glynn (North West Leicestershire)
Ashdown, Rt. Hon. Jeremy John Durham (Yeovil)
Ashton, Joseph William (Bassetlaw)
Aspinwall, Jack Heywood (Wansdyke)
Atkins, Robert James (South Ribble)
Atkinson, David Anthony (Bournemouth, East)
Atkinson, Peter Landreth (Hexham)
Austin-Walker, John Eric (Woolwich)

B

Baker, Rt. Hon. Kenneth Wilfred CH (Mole Valley)
Baker, Nicholas Brian (Dorset, North)
Baldry, Antony Brian (Banbury)
Banks, Matthew Richard William (Southport)
Banks, Robert George (Harrogate)
Banks, Tony (Newham, North-West)
Barnes, Harold (North-East Derbyshire)
Barron, Kevin John (Rother Valley)
Bates, Michael Walton (Langbaurgh)
Batiste, Spencer Lee (Elmet)
Battle, John Dominic (Leeds, West)
Bayley, Hugh (York)
Beckett, Mrs. Margaret Mary (Derby, South)
Beggs, Roy (East Antrim)
Beith, Alan James (Berwick-upon-Tweed)
Bell, Stuart (Middlesbrough)
Bellingham, Henry Campbell (North-West Norfolk)
Bendall, Vivian Walter Hough (Ilford, North)
Benn, Rt. Hon. Anthony Neil Wedgwood (Chesterfield)
Bennett, Andrew Francis (Denton and Reddish)
Benton, Joseph Edward (Bootle)
Beresford, Sir Alexander Paul (Croydon, Central)
Bermingham, Gerald Edward (St. Helens, South)
Berry, Roger Leslie (Kingswood)
Betts, Clive James Charles (Sheffield, Attercliffe)
Biffen, Rt. Hon. William John (North Shropshire)
Blackburn, John Graham (Dudley, West)
Blair, Anthony Charles Lynton (Sedgefield)
Blunkett, David (Sheffield, Brightside)
Boateng, Paul Yaw (Brent, South)
Body, Sir Richard Bernard Frank Stewart (Holland with Boston)
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas Cosmo (Upminster)
Booth, Vernon Edward Hartley (Finchley)
Boothroyd, Miss Betty (West Bromwich, West)
Boswell, Timothy Eric (Daventry)
Bottomley, Peter James (Eltham)
Bottomley, Rt. Hon. Mrs. Virginia Hilda Brunette Maxwell (South-West Surrey)
Bowden, Andrew MBE (Brighton, Kemptown)
Bowis, John Crocket OBE (Battersea)
Boyce, James (Rotherham)
Boyes, Roland (Houghton and Washington)
Boyson, Rt. Hon. Sir Rhodes (Brent, North)
Bradley, Keith John Charles (Manchester, Withington)
Brandreth, Gyles Daubeney (City of Chester
Bray, Dr. Jeremy William (Motherwell, South)
Brazier, Julian William Hendy (Canterbury)
Bright, Graham Frank James (Luton, South)
Brooke, Rt. Hon. Peter Leonard (City of London and Westminster, South)
Brown, James Gordon (Dunfermline, East)
Brown, Michael Russell (Brigg and Cleethorpes)
Brown, Nicholas Hugh (Newcastle upon Tyne, East)
Browning, Mrs. Angela Frances (Tiverton)
Bruce, Ian Cameron (South Dorset)
Bruce, Malcolm Gray (Gordon)
Budgen, Nicholas William (Wolverhampton, South-West)
Burden, Richard Haines (Birmingham, Northfield)
Burns, Simon Hugh McGuigan (Chelmsford)
Burt, Alistair James Hendrie (Bury, North)
Butcher, John Patrick (Coventry, South-West)
Butler, Peter (Milton Keynes, North-East)
Butterfill, John Valentine (Bournemouth, West)
Byers, Stephen John (Wallsend)

C

Caborn, Richard George (Sheffield, Central)
Callaghan, James (Heywood and Middleton)
Campbell, Anne (Cambridge)
Campbell, Ronald (Blyth Valley)
Campbell, Walter Menzies CBE QC (Fife, North-East)
Campbell-Savours, Dale Norman (Workington)
Canavan, Dennis Andrew (Falkirk, West)
Cann, James Charles (Ipswich)
Carlile, Alexander Charles QC (Montgomery)
Carlisle, John Russell (Luton, North)
Carlisle, Kenneth Melville (Lincoln)
Carrington, Matthew Hadrian Marshall (Fulham)

Carttiss, Michael Reginald Harry (Great Yarmouth)
Cash, William Nigel Paul (Stafford)
Channon, Rt. Hon. Henry Paul Guinness (Southend, West)
Chaplin, Mrs. Sybil Judith (Newbury)
Chapman, Sydney Brookes (Chipping Barnet)
Chisholm, Malcolm George Richardson (Edinburgh, Leith)
Churchill, Winston Spencer (Davyhulme)
Clapham, Michael (Barnsley, West and Penistone)
Clappison, William James (Hertsmere)
Clark, David George (South Shields)
Clark, Michael (Rochford)
Clarke, Eric Lionel (Midlothian)
Clarke, Rt. Hon. Kenneth Harry QC (Rushcliffe)
Clarke, Thomas CBE (Monklands, West)
Clelland, David Gordon (Tyne Bridge)
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey Robert (Cirencester and Tewkesbury)
Clwyd, Mrs. Ann (Cynon Valley)
Coe, Sebastian Newbold (Falmouth and Camborne)
Coffey, Ann (Stockport)
Cohen, Harry Michael (Leyton)
Colvin, Michael Keith Beale (Romsey and Waterside)
Congdon, David Leonard (Croydon, North-East)
Connarty, Michael (Falkirk, East)
Conway, Derek Leslie (Shrewsbury and Atcham)
Cook, Francis (Stockton, North)
Cook, Robert Finlayson (Livingston)
Coombs, Anthony Michael Vincent (Wyre Forest)
Coombs, Simon Christopher (Swindon)
Cope, Rt. Hon. Sir John Ambrose (Northavon)
Corbett, Robin (Birmingham, Erdington)
Corbyn, Jeremy Bernard (Islington, North)
Cormack, Patrick Thomas (South Staffordshire)
Corston, Jean Ann (Bristol, East)
Couchman, James Randall (Gillingham)
Cousins, James Mackay (Newcastle upon Tyne, Central)
Cox, Thomas Michael (Tooting)
Cran, James Douglas (Beverley)
Critchley, Julian Michael Gordon (Aldershot)
Cryer, George Robert (Bradford, South)
Cummings, John Scott (Easington)
Cunliffe, Lawrence Francis (Leigh)
Cunningham, James Dolan (Coventry, South-East)
Cunningham, John Anderson (Copeland)
Currie, Mrs. Edwina (South Derbyshire)
Curry, David Maurice (Skipton and Ripon)

D

Dafis, Cynog Glyndwr (Ceredigion and Pembroke, North)
Dalyell, Tam (Linlithgow)
Darling, Alistair Maclean (Edinburgh, Central)
Davidson, Ian Graham (Glasgow, Govan)
Davies, Bryan (Oldham Central and Royton)
Davies, Rt. Hon. David John Denzil (Llanelli)
Davies, John Quentin (Stamford and Spalding)
Davies, Ronald (Caerphilly)
Davis, David Michael (Boothferry)
Davis, Terence Anthony Gordon (Birmingham, Hodge Hill)
Day, Stephen Richard (Cheadle)
Denham, John Yorke (Southampton, Itchen)
Deva, Niranjan Joseph Aditya (Brentford and Isleworth)
Devlin, Timothy Robert (Stockton, South)
Dewar, Donald Campbell (Glasgow, Garscadden)
Dickens, Geoffrey Kenneth (Littleborough and Saddleworth)
Dicks, Terence Patrick (Hayes and Harlington)
Dixon, Donald (Jarrow)
Dobson, Frank Gordon (Holborn and St. Pancras)
Donohoe, Brian (Cunninghame, South)
Dorrell, Stephen James (Loughborough)
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James (Edinburgh, West)
Dover, Densmore Ronald (Chorley)
Dowd, James Patrick, (Lewisham, West)
Duncan, Alan James Carter (Rutland and Melton)
Duncan-Smith, George Iain (Chingford)
Dunn, Robert John (Dartford)
Dunnachie, James Francis (Glasgow, Pollok)
Dunwoody, Hon. Mrs. Gwyneth Patricia (Crewe and Nantwich)
Durant, Sir Robert Anthony Bevis (Reading, West)
Dykes, Hugh John Maxwell (Harrow, East)

E

Eagle, Angela (Wallasey)
Eastham, Kenneth (Manchester, Blackley)
Eggar, Timothy John Crommelin (Enfield, North)
Elletson, Harold Daniel Hope (Blackpool, North)
Emery, Sir Peter Frank Hannibal (Honiton)
Enright, Derek Anthony (Hemsworth)
Etherington, William (Sunderland, North)
Evans, David John (Welwyn Hatfield)
Evans, John (St. Helens, North)
Evans, Jonathan Peter (Brecon and Radnor)
Evans, Nigel Martin (Ribble Valley)
Evans, Roger Kenneth (Monmouth)
Evennett, David Anthony (Erith and Crayford)
Ewing, Mrs. Margaret Anne (Moray)

F

Faber, David James Christian (Westbury)
Fabricant, Michael Louis David (Mid Staffordshire)
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas Hardwick QC (Perth and Kinross)
Fatchett, Derek John (Leeds, Central)
Faulds, Andrew Matthew William (Warley, East)
Fenner, Dame Peggy Edith (Medway)
Field, Barry John Anthony (Isle of Wight)
Field, Frank (Birkenhead)
Fishburn, John Dudley (Kensington)
Fisher, Mark (Stoke-on-Trent, Central)
Flynn, Paul Phillip (Newport, West)
Fookes, Dame Janet Evelyn (Plymouth, Drake)
Forman, Francis Nigel (Carshalton and Wallington)
Forsyth, Michael Bruce (Stirling)
Forsythe, Clifford (South Antrim)
Forth, Eric (Mid-Worcestershire)
Foster, Derek (Bishop Auckland)
Foster, Donald Michael Ellison (Bath)
Foulkes, George (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley)
Fowler, Rt. Hon. Sir Peter Norman (Sutton Coldfield)
Fox, Sir John Marcus MBE (Shipley)
Fox, Liam (Woodspring)

Fraser, John Denis (Norwood)
Freeman, Roger Norman (Kettering)
French, Douglas Charles (Gloucester)
Fry, Peter Derek (Wellingborough)
Fyfe, Mrs. Maria (Glasgow, Maryhill)

G

Galbraith, Samuel Laird (Strathkelvin and Bearsden)
Gale, Roger James (North Thanet)
Gallie, Philip Roy (Ayr)
Galloway, George (Glasgow, Hillhead)
Gapes, Michael John (Ilford, South)
Gardiner, Sir George Arthur (Reigate)
Garel-Jones, William Armand Thomas Tristan (Watford)
Garnier, Edward Henry (Harborough)
Garrett, John Laurence (Norwich, South)
George, Bruce Thomas (Walsall, South)
Gerrard, Neil Francis (Walthamstow)
Gilbert, Rt. Hon. John William (Dudley, East)
Gill, Christopher John Fred RD (Ludlow)
Gillan, Mrs. Cheryl Elise Kendall (Chesham and Amersham)
Godman, Norman Anthony (Greenock and Port Glasgow)
Godsiff, Roger Duncan (Birmingham, Small Heath)
Golding, Mrs. Llinos (Newcastle-under-Lyme)
Goodlad, Alastair Robertson (Eddisbury)
Goodson-Wickes, Dr. Charles (Wimbledon)
Gordon, Mrs. Mildred (Bow and Poplar)
Gorman, Mrs. Theresa Ellen (Billericay)
Gorst, John Michael (Hendon, North)
Gould, Bryan Charles (Dagenham)
Graham, Thomas (Renfrew, West and Inverclyde)
Grant, Bernard Alexander Montgomery (Tottenham)
Grant, Sir John Anthony (South-West Cambridgeshire)
Greenway, Harry (Ealing, North)
Greenway, John Robert (Ryedale)
Griffiths, Nigel (Edinburgh, South)
Griffiths, Peter Harry Steve (Portsmouth, North)
Griffiths, Winston James (Bridgend)
Grocott, Bruce Joseph (The Wrekin)
Grylls, Sir William Michael John (North-West Surrey)
Gummer, Rt. Hon. John Selwyn (Suffolk, Coastal)
Gunnell, John (Leeds, South and Morley)

H

Hague, William Jefferson (Richmond, Yorks)
Hain, Peter Gerald (Neath)
Hall, Mike Thomas (Warrington, South)
Hamilton, Rt. Hon. Archibald Gavin (Epsom and Ewell)
Hamilton, Mostyn Neil (Tatton)
Hampson, Keith (Leeds, North-West)
Hanley, Jeremy James (Richmond and Barnes)
Hannam, John Gordon (Exeter)
Hanson, David George (Delyn)
Hardy, Peter (Wentworth)
Hargreaves, Andrew Raikes (Birmingham, Hall Green)
Harman Ms. Harriet Ruth (Peckham)
Harris, David Anthony (St. Ives)
Harvey, Nick (North Devon)
Haselhurst, Alan Gordon Barraclough (Saffron Walden)
Hattersley, Rt. Hon. Roy Sydney George (Birmingham, Sparkbrook)
Hawkins, John Nicholas (Blackpool, South)
Hawksley, Philip Warren (Halesowen and Stourbridge)
Hayes, Jeremy Joseph James (Harlow)
Heald, Oliver (North Hertfordshire)
Heath, Rt. Hon. Sir Edward Richard George MBE (Old Bexley and Sidcup)
Heathcoat-Amory, David Philip (Wells)
Henderson, Douglas John (Newcastle upon Tyne, North)
Hendron, Dr. Joseph Gerard (Belfast West)
Hendry, Charles (High Peak)
Heppell, John (Nottingham East)
Heseltine, Rt. Hon. Michael Ray Dibdin (Henley)
Hicks, Robert Adrian (South-East Cornwall)
Higgins, Rt. Hon. Terence Langley (Worthing)
Hill, Trevor Keith (Streatham)
Hill, Stanley James Allen (Southampton, Test)
Hinchliffe, David Martin (Wakefield)
Hoey, Catharine Letitia (Vauxhall)
Hogg, Rt. Hon. Douglas Martin QC (Grantham)
Hogg, Norman (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth)
Home Robertson, John David (East Lothian)
Hood, James (Clydesdale)
Hoon, Geoffrey William (Ashfield)
Horam, John Rhodes (Orpington)
Hordern, Sir Peter Maudsley (Horsham)
Howard, Rt. Hon. Michael QC (Folkestone and Hythe)
Howarth, Alan Thomas CBE (Stratford-on-Avon)
Howarth, George Edward (Knowsley, North)
Howell, Rt. Hon. David Arthur Russell (Guildford)
Howell, Ralph Frederic (North Norfolk)
Howells, Dr. Kim Scott (Pontypridd)
Hoyle, Eric Douglas Harvey (Warrington, North)
Hughes, Kevin Michael (Doncaster, North)
Hughes, Robert Gurth (Harrow, West)
Hughes, Robert (Aberdeen, North)
Hughes, Royston John (Newport, East)
Hughes, Simon Henry Ward (Southwark and Bermondsey)
Hume, John (Foyle)
Hunt, Rt. Hon. David James Fletcher MBE (Wirral, West)
Hunt, Sir John Leonard (Ravensbourne)
Hunter, Andrew Robert Frederick (Basingstoke)
Hurd, Rt. Hon. Douglas Richard CBE (Witney)
Hutton, John Matthew Patrick (Barrow and Furness)

I

Illsley, Eric Evelyn (Barnsley, Central)
Ingram, Adam Paterson (East Kilbride)

J

Jack, John Michael (Fylde)
Jackson, Glenda May (Hamsptead and Highgate)
Jackson, Helen Margaret (Sheffield, Hillsborough)
Jackson, Robert Victor (Wantage)
Jamieson, David Charles (Plymouth, Devonport)
Janner, Hon. Greville Ewan QC (Leicester, West)
Jenkin, Bernard Christison (Colchester, North)
Jessel, Toby Francis Henry (Twickenham)

Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey (Wealden)
Johnston, Sir David Russell (Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber)
Jones, Gwilym Hadyn (Cardiff, North)
Jones, Ieuan Wyn (Ynys Môn)
Jones, Jonathan Owen (Cardiff Central)
Jones, Lynne Mary (Birmingham, Selly Oak)
Jones, Martyn David (Clwyd, South-West)
Jones, Nigel David (Cheltenham)
Jones, Robert Brannock (West Hertfordshire)
Jones, Stephen Barry (Alyn and Deeside)
Jopling, Rt. Hon. Thomas Michael (Westmorland and Lonsdale)
Jowell, Tessa Jane Helen Douglas (Dulwich)

K

Kaufman, Rt. Hon. Gerald Bernard (Manchester, Gorton)
Keen, David Alan (Feltham and Heston)
Kellett-Bowman Dame Mary Elaine (Lancaster)
Kennedy Charles Peter (Ross, Cromarty and Skye)
Kennedy, Jane Elizabeth (Liverpool, Broadgreen)
Key, Simon Robert (Salisbury)
Khubra, Piara Singh (Ealing, Southall)
Kilfedder, James Alexander (North Down)
Kilfoyle, Peter (Liverpool, Walton)
King, Rt. Hon. Thomas Jeremy CH (Bridgwater)
Kinnock, Rt. Hon. Neil Gordon (Islwyn)
Kirkhope, Timothy John Robert (Leeds, North-East)
Kirkwood, Archibald Johnstone (Roxburgh and Berwickshire)
Knapman, Roger Maurice (Stroud)
Knight, Mrs. Angela Ann (Erewash)
Knight, Gregory (Derby, North)
Knight, Dame Joan Christabel Jill DBE (Birmingham, Edgbaston)
Knox, David Laidlaw (Staffordshire, Moorlands)
Kynoch, George Alexander Bryson (Kincardine and Deeside)

L

Lait, Mrs. Jacqueline Anne Harkness (Hastings and Rye)
Lamont, Rt. Hon. Norman Stewart Hughson (Kingston upon Thames)
Lang, Rt. Hon. Ian Bruce (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale)
Lawrence, Ivan John QC (Burton)
Legg, Barry Charles (Milton Keynes, South West)
Leigh, Edward Julian Egerton (Gainsborough and Horncastle)
Leighton, Ronald (Newham, North-East)
Lennox-Boyd, Hon. Mark Alexander (Morecambe and Lunesdale)
Lester, James Theodore (Broxtowe)
Lestor, Miss Joan (Eccles)
Lewis, Terence (Worsley)
Lidington, David Roy (Aylesbury)
Lightbown, David Lincoln (South-East Staffordshire)
Lilley, Rt. Hon. Peter Bruce (St. Albans)
Litherland, Robert Kenneth (Manchester, Central)
Livingstone, Kenneth Robert (Brent, East)
Lloyd, Anthony Joseph (Stretford)
Lloyd, Peter Robert Cable (Fareham)
Llwyd, Elfyn (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy)
Lofthouse, Geoffrey (Pontefract and Castleford)
Lord, Michael Nicholson (Central Suffolk)
Loyden, Edward (Liverpool, Garston)
Luff, Peter James (Worcester)
Lyell, Rt. Hon. Sir Nicholas Walter QC (Mid-Bedfordshire)
Lynne, Elizabeth (Rochdale)

M

McAllion, John (Dundee, East)
McAvoy, Thomas (Glasgow, Rutherglen)
McCartney, Ian (Makerfield)
McCrea, Rev Robert Thomas William (Mid-Ulster)
MacDonald, Calum Alastair (Western Isles)
McFall, John (Dumbarton)
McGrady, Edward Kevin (South Down)
MacGregor, Rt. Hon. John Roddick Russell OBE (South Norfolk)
MacKay, Andrew James (East Berkshire)
McKelvey, William (Kilmarnock and Loudoun)
Mackinlay, Andrew Stuart (Thurrock)
Maclean, David John (Penrith and The Border)
McLeish, Henry Baird (Fife, Central)
Maclennan, Robert Adam Ross (Caithness and Sutherland)
McLoughlin, Patrick Allen (West Derbyshire)
McMaster, Gordon (Paisley, South)
MacNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick Michael Ernest David (New Forest)
McNamara, Joseph Kevin (Kingston upon Hull, North)
McWilliam, John David (Blaydon)
Madden, Maxwell Francis (Bradford, West)
Madel, William David (South-West Bedfordshire)
Maginnis, Kenneth (Fermanagh and South Tyrone)
Mahon, Mrs. Alice (Halifax)
Maitland, Olga Helen (Sutton and Cheam)
Major, Rt. Hon. John (Huntingdon)
Mallon, Seamus (Newry and Armagh)
Malone, Peter Gerald (Winchester)
Mandelson, Peter Benjamin (Hartlepool)
Mans, Keith Douglas Rowland (Wyre)
Marek, Dr. John (Wrexham)
Marland, Paul (West Gloucestershire)
Marlow, Antony Rivers (Northampton, North)
Marshall, David (Glasgow, Shettleston)
Marshall, James (Leicester, South)
Marshall, John Leslie (Hendon, South)
Marshall, Sir Robert Michael (Arundel)
Martin, David John Pattison (Portsmouth, South)
Martin, Michael John (Glasgow, Springburn)
Martlew, Eric Anthony (Carlisle)
Mates, Michael John (East Hampshire)
Mawhinney, Brian Stanley (Peterborough)
Maxton, John Alston (Glasgow, Cathcart)
Mayhew, Rt Hon. Sir Patrick Barnabas Burke QC (Tunbridge Wells)
Meacher, Michael Hugh (Oldham, West)
Meale, Joseph Alan (Mansfield)
Mellor, Rt. Hon. David John QC (Putney)
Merchant, Piers Rolf Garfield (Beckenham)
Michael, Alun Edward (Cardiff, South and Penarth)
Michie, Mrs. Janet Ray (Argyll and Bute)
Michie, William (Sheffield, Heeley)

Milburn, Alan (Darlington)
Miller, Andrew Peter (Ellesmere Port and Neston)
Milligan, Stephen David Wyatt (Eastleigh)
Mills, Iain Campbell (Meriden)
Mitchell, Andrew John Bower (Gedling)
Mitchell, Austin Vernon (Great Grimsby)
Mitchell, Sir David Bower (North-West Hampshire)
Moate, Roger Denis (Faversham)
Molyneaux, Rt. Hon. James Henry (Lagan Valley)
Monro, Sir Hector Seymour Peter AE (Dumfries)
Montgomery, Sir William Fergus (Altrincham and Sale)
Moonie, Dr. Lewis George (Kirkcaldy)
Morgan, Hywel Rhodri (Cardiff, West)
Morley, Elliot Anthony (Glanford and Scunthorpe)
Morris, Rt. Hon. Alfred (Manchester, Wythenshawe)
Morris, Estelle (Birmingham, Yardley)
Morris, Rt. Hon. John QC (Aberavon)
Morris, Michael Wolfgang Laurence (Northampton, South)
Moss, Malcolm Douglas (North-East Cambridgeshire)
Mowlam, Ms. Marjorie (Redcar)
Mudie, George Edward (Leeds, East)
Mullin, Christopher John (Sunderland, South)
Murphy, Paul Peter (Torfaen)

N

Needham, Richard Francis (North Wiltshire)
Nelson, Richard Anthony (Chichester)
Neubert, Sir Michael Jon (Romford)
Newton, Rt. Hon. Antony Harold OBE (Braintree)
Nicholls, Patrick Charles Martyn (Teignbridge)
Nicholson, David John (Taunton)
Nicholson, Miss Emma Harriet (Torridge and West Devon)
Norris, Steven John (Epping Forest)

O

Oakes, Rt. Hon. Gordon James (Halton)
O'Brien, Michael (North Warwickshire)
O'Brien, William (Normanton)
O'Hara, Edward (Knowsley, South)
Olner, William John (Nuneaton)
O'Neill, Martin John (Clackmannan)
Onslow, Rt. Hon. Cranley Gordon Douglas (Woking)
Oppenheim, Phillip Anthony Charles Lawrence (Amber Valley)
Orme, Rt. Hon. Stanley (Salford, East)
Ottaway, Richard Geoffrey James (Croydon, South)

P

Page, Richard Lewis (South-West Hertfordshire)
Paice, James Edward Thornton (Cambridge, South East)
Paisley, Rev. Ian Richard Kyle (North Antrim)
Parry, Robert (Liverpool, Riverside)
Patchett, Terry (Barnsley, East)
Patnick, Cyril Irvine (Sheffield, Hallam)
Patten, Rt. Hon. John Haggitt Charles (Oxford, West and Abingdon)
Pattie, Rt. Hon. Sir Geoffrey Edwin (Chertsey and Walton)
Pawsey, James Francis (Rugby and Kenilworth)
Peacock, Mrs. Elizabeth Joan (Batley and Spen)
Pendry, Thomas (Stalybridge and Hyde)
Pickles, Eric Jack (Brentwood and Ongar)
Pickthall, Colin (West Lancashire)
Pike, Peter Leslie (Burnley)
Pope, Greg James (Hyndburn)
Porter, David John (Waveney)
Porter, George Barrington (Wirral, South)
Portillo, Michael Denzil Xavier (Enfield, Southgate)
Powell, Raymond (Ogmore)
Powell, William Rhys (Corby)
Prentice, Mrs. Bridget Theresa (Lewisham, East)
Prentice, Gordon (Pendle)
Prescott, John Leslie (Kingston upon Hull, East)
Primarolo, Ms. Dawn (Bristol, South)
Purchase, Kenneth (Wolverhampton, North East)

Q

Quin, Ms. Joyce Gwendolen (Gateshead, East)

R

Radice, Giles Heneage (North Durham)
Randall, Stuart Jeffrey (Kingston upon Hull, West)
Rathbone, John Rankin (Lewes)
Raynsford, Wyvill Richard Nicolls (Greenwich)
Redmond, Martin (Don Valley)
Redwood, John Alan (Wokingham)
Reid, John (Motherwell, North)
Renton, Rt. Hon. Ronald Timothy (Mid-Sussex)
Richards, Roderick (Clwyd North West)
Richardson, Miss Josephine (Barking)
Riddick, Graham Edward Galloway (Colne Valley)
Rifkind, Rt. Hon. Malcolm Leslie QC (Edinburgh, Pentlands)
Robathan, Andrew Robert George (Blaby)
Roberts, Rt. Hon. Sir Ieuan Wyn Pritchard (Conwy)
Robertson, George Islay Macneill (Hamilton)
Robertson, Raymond Scott (Aberdeen, South)
Robinson, Geoffrey (Coventry, North-West)
Robinson, Mark Noel Foster (Somerton and Frome)
Robinson, Peter David (Belfast, East)
Roche, Barbara Maureen (Hornsey and Wood Green)
Roe, Mrs. Marion Audrey (Broxbourne)
Rogers, Allan Ralph (Rhondda)
Rooker, Jeffrey William (Birmingham, Perry Barr)
Rooney, Terence Henry (Bradford, North)
Ross, Ernest (Dundee, West)
Ross, William (East Londonderry)
Rowe, Andrew John Bernard (Mid-Kent)
Rowlands, Edward (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney)
Ruddock, Ms. Joan Mary (Lewisham, Deptford)
Rumbold, Rt. Hon. Dame Angela Claire Rosemary CBE (Mitcham and Morden)
Ryder, Rt. Hon. Richard Andrew OBE (Mid-Norfolk)

S

Sackville, Hon. Thomas Geoffrey (Bolton, West)
Sainsbury, Hon. Timothy Alan Davan (Hove)

Salmond, Alexander Elliott Anderson (Banff and Buchan)
Scott, Rt. Hon. Nicholas Paul MBE (Chelsea)
Sedgemore, Brian Charles (Hackney, South and Shoreditch)
Shaw, David Lawrence (Dover)
Shaw, Sir John Giles Dunkerley (Pudsey)
Sheerman, Barry John (Huddersfield)
Sheldon, Rt. Hon. Robert Edward (Ashton under Lyne)
Shephard, Rt. Hon. Mrs. Gillian Patricia (South-West Norfolk)
Shepherd, Colin Ryley (Hereford)
Shepherd, Richard Charles Scrimgeour (Aldridge-Brownhills)
Shersby, Julian Michael (Uxbridge)
Shore, Rt. Hon. Peter David (Bethnal Green and Stepney)
Short, Clare (Birmingham, Ladywood)
Sims, Roger Edward (Chislehurst)
Skeet, Sir Trevor Herbert Harry (North Bedfordshire)
Skinner, Dennis Edward (Bolsover)
Smith, Andrew David (Oxford, East)
Smith, Christopher Robert, (Islington, South and Finsbury)
Smith, Sir Dudley Gordon (Warwick and Leamington)
Smith, Rt. Hon. John QC (Monklands, East)
Smith, Llewellyn (Blaenau Gwent)
Smith, Timothy John (Beaconsfield)
Smyth, Rev. William Martin (Belfast, South)
Snape, Peter Charles (West Bromwich, East)
Soley, Clive Stafford (Hammersmith)
Spearing, Nigel John (Newham, South)
Speed, Herbert Keith (Ashford)
Spellar, John Francis (Warley, West)
Spencer, Derek Harold (Brighton Pavilion)
Spicer, Sir James Wilton (West Dorset)
Spicer, William Michael Hardy (South Worcestershire)
Spink, Dr. Robert Michael (Castle Point)
Spring, Richard John Grenville (Bury St. Edmunds)
Sproat, Iain MacDonald (Harwich)
Squire, Mrs. Rachel Anne (Dumfermline West)
Squire, Robin Clifford (Hornchurch)
Stanley, Rt. Hon. Sir John Paul (Tonbridge and Malling)
Steel, Rt. Hon. Sir David Martin Scott (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale)
Steen, Anthony David (South Hams)
Steinberg, Gerald Neil (City of Durham)
Stephen, Michael (Shoreham)
Stern, Michael Charles (Bristol, North-West)
Stevenson, George William (Stoke-on-Trent, South)
Stewart, John Allan (Eastwood)
Stott, Roger CBE (Wigan)
Strang, Gavin Steel (Edinburgh, East)
Straw, John Whitaker (Blackburn)
Streeter, Gary Nicholas (Plymouth, Sutton)
Sumberg, David Anthony Gerald (Bury, South)
Sweeney, Walter Edward (Vale of Glamorgan)
Sykes, John David (Scarborough)

T

Tapsell, Sir Peter Hannay Bailey (East Lindsey)
Taylor, Sir Edward Macmillan (Southend, East)
Taylor, Ian Colin, MBE (Esher)
Taylor, Rt. Hon. John David (Strangford)
Taylor, John Mark (Solihull)
Taylor, Matthew Owen John (Truro)
Taylor, Mrs. Winifred Ann (Dewsbury)
Temple-Morris, Peter (Leominster)
Thomason, Kenneth Roy (Bromsgrove)
Thompson, Sir Donald (Calder Valley)
Thompson, Hugh Patrick (Norwich, North)
Thompson, John (Wansbeck)
Thornton, George Malcolm (Crosby)
Thurnham, Peter Giles (Bolton, North-East)
Tipping, Simon Patrick (Sherwood)
Townend, John Ernest (Bridlington)
Townsend, Cyril David (Bexleyheath)
Tracey, Richard Patrick (Surbiton)
Tredinnick, David Arthur Stephen (Bosworth)
Trend, Michael St. John (Windsor and Maidenhead)
Trimble, David (Upper Bann)
Trotter, Neville Guthrie (Tynemouth)
Turner, Dennis (Wolverhampton, South-East)
Twinn, Ian David (Edmonton)
Tyler, Paul Archer (North Cornwall)

V

Vaughan, Sir Gerard Folliott (Reading, East)
Vaz, Nigel Keith Anthony Standish (Leicester, East)
Viggers, Peter John (Gosport)

W

Waldegrave, Rt. Hon. William Arthur (Bristol, West)
Walden, George Gordon Harvey CMG (Buckingham)
Walker, Alfred Cecil (Belfast, North)
Walker, Rt. Hon. Harold (Doncaster, Central)
Walker, William Connoll (North Tayside)
Wallace, James Robert (Orkney and Shetland)
Waller, Gary Peter Anthony (Keighley)
Walley, Joan Lorraine (Stoke on Trent, North)
Ward, John Devereux CBE (Poole)
Wardell, Gareth Lodwig (Gower)
Wardle, Charles Frederick (Bexhill and Battle)
Wareing, Robert Nelson (Liverpool, West Derby)
Watson, Michael Goodall (Glasgow, Central)
Watts, John Arthur (Slough)
Wells, Bowen (Hertford and Stortford)
Welsh, Andrew (Angus, East)
Wheeler, Sir John Daniel (Westminster, North)
Whitney, Raymond William OBE (Wycombe)
Whittingdale, John Flasby Lawrance (Colchester South and Maldon)
Wicks, Malcolm Hunt (Croydon North West)
Widdecombe, Miss Ann Noreen (Maidstone)
Wiggin, Alfred William TD (Weston-super-Mare)
Wigley, Dafydd (Caernarfon)
Wilkinson, John Arbuthnot Ducane (Ruislip-Northwood)
Willetts, David Lindsay (Havant)
Williams, Rt. Hon. Alan John (Swansea, West)
Williams, Alan Wynne (Carmarthen)
Wilshire, David (Spelthorne)
Wilson, Brian David Henderson (Cunninghame, North)
Winnick, David Julian (Walsall, North)
Winterton, Mrs. Jane Ann (Congleton)
Winterton, Nicholas Raymond (Macclesfield)
Wise, Mrs. Audrey (Preston)

HER MAJESTY'S GOVERNMENT

MEMBERS OF THE CABINET

(FORMED BY THE RT. HON. JOHN MAJOR, MP, APRIL 1992)

PRIME MINISTER, FIRST LORD OF THE TREASURY AND MINISTER FOR THE CIVIL SERVICE—The Rt. Hon. John Major, MP
LORD CHANCELLOR—The Rt. Hon. The Lord Mackay of Clashfern
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS—The Rt. Hon. Douglas Hurd, CBE, MP
CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER—The Rt. Hon. Norman Lamont, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE HOME DEPARTMENT—The Rt. Hon. Kenneth Clarke, QC, MP
PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD OF TRADE (SECRETARY OF STATE FOR TRADE AND INDUSTRY)—The Rt. Hon. Michael Heseltine, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR TRANSPORT—The Rt. Hon. John MacGregor, OBE, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DEFENCE—The Rt. Hon. Malcolm Rifkind, QC, MP
LORD PRIVY SEAL AND LEADER OF THE HOUSE OF LORDS—The Rt. Hon. The Lord Wakeham
LORD PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL AND LEADER OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS—The Rt. Hon. Tony Newton, OBE, MP
MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD—The Rt. Hon. John Gummer, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE ENVIRONMENT—The Rt. Hon. Michael Howard, QC, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR WALES—The Rt. Hon. David Hunt, MBE, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR SOCIAL SECURITY—The Rt. Hon. Peter Lilley, MP
CHANCELLOR OF THE DUCHY OF LANCASTER—The Rt. Hon. William Waldegrave, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR SCOTLAND—The Rt. Hon. Ian Lang, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NATIONAL HERITAGE—The Rt. Hon. David Mellor, QC, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND—The Rt. Hon. Sir Patrick Mayhew, QC, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR EDUCATION—The Rt. Hon. John Patten, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR HEALTH—The Rt. Hon. Virginia Bottomley, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR EMPLOYMENT—The Rt. Hon. Gillian Shephard, MP
CHIEF SECRETARY TO THE TREASURY—The Rt. Hon. Michael Portillo, MP

LAW OFFICERS

ATTORNEY-GENERAL—The Rt. Hon. Sir Nicholas Lyell, QC, MP
LORD-ADVOCATE—The Rt. Hon. The Lord Rodger of Earlsferry, QC
SOLICITOR-GENERAL—Sir Derek Spencer, QC, MP
SOLICITOR-GENERAL FOR SCOTLAND—Thomas Dawson, Esq, QC

MINISTERS NOT IN THE CABINET

PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY TO THE TREASURY—The Rt. Hon. Richard Ryder, OBE, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE, FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE—
Minister for Overseas Development—The Rt. Hon. The Baroness Chalker of Wallasey
The Rt. Hon. Douglas Hogg, QC, MP
The Rt. Hon. Tristan Garel-Jones, MP
The Rt. Hon. Alastair Goodlad, MP
FINANCIAL SECRETARY TO THE TREASURY—Stephen Dorrell, Esq, MP
PAYMASTER GENERAL—The Rt. Hon. Sir John Cope, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE, HOME OFFICE—
The Rt. Hon. The Earl Ferrers
Peter Lloyd, Esq, MP
Michael Jack, Esq, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE, DEPARTMENT OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY—
Minister for Industry—The Rt. Hon. Tim Sainsbury, MP
Minister for Trade—Richard Needham, Esq, MP
Minister for Energy—Tim Eggar, Esq, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE, DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORT—
Minister for Aviation and Shipping—The Rt. Hon. The Earl of Caithness
Minister for Public Transport—Roger Freeman, Esq, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE, MINISTRY OF DEFENCE—
Minister of State for the Armed Forces—The Rt. Hon. Archibald Hamilton, MP
Minister of State for Defence Procurement—Jonathan Aitken, Esq, MP
MINISTER OF STATE, MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD—David Curry, Esq, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE, DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT—
Minister for Housing and Planning—Sir George Young, MP
Minister for Local Government and Inner Cities—John Redwood, Esq, MP
Minister for the Environment and Countryside—David Maclean, Esq, MP
MINISTER OF STATE, WELSH OFFICE—The Rt. Hon. Sir Wyn Roberts, MP
MINISTER OF STATE, DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SECURITY—
Minister for Social Security and Disabled People—The Rt. Hon. Nicholas Scott, MBE, MP
MINISTER OF STATE, SCOTTISH OFFICE—The Rt. Hon. The Lord Fraser of Carmyllie, QC

MINISTERS OF STATE, NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE—
Robert Atkins, Esq, MP
Michael Mates, Esq, MP
MINISTER OF STATE, DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION—The Baroness Blatch, CBE
MINISTER OF STATE, DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH—
Minister for Health—Dr. Brian Mawhinney, MP
MINISTER OF STATE, DEPARTMENT OF EMPLOYMENT—Michael Forsyth, Esq, MP

DEPARTMENTS OF STATE AND MINISTERS

Agriculture, Fisheries and Food—
MINISTER—The Rt. Hon. John Gummer, MP
MINISTER OF STATE—David Curry, Esq, MP
PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARIES—
The Earl Howe
The Hon. Nicholas Soames, MP

Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster—
The Rt. Hon. William Waldegrave, MP

Civil Service, Office of the Minister for the—
PRIME MINISTER AND MINISTER FOR THE CIVIL SERVICE—The Rt. Hon. John Major, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE—Robert Jackson, Esq, MP

Defence—
SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt. Hon. Malcolm Rifkind, QC, MP
MINISTER OF STATE FOR THE ARMED FORCES—The Rt. Hon. Archibald Hamilton, MP
MINISTER OF STATE FOR DEFENCE PROCUREMENT—Jonathan Aitken, Esq, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DEFENCE—The Lord Cecil of Essenden

Education—
SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt. Hon. John Patten, MP
MINISTER OF STATE—The Baroness Blatch, CBE
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
Eric Forth, Esq, MP
Nigel Forman, Esq, MP

Employment—
SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt. Hon. Gillian Shephard, MP
MINISTER OF STATE—Michael Forsyth, Esq, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
Patrick McLoughlin, Esq, MP
The Viscount Ullswater

Environment—
SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt. Hon. Michael Howard, QC, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE—
Minister for Housing and Planning—Sir George Young, MP
Minister for Local Government and Inner Cities—John Redwood, Esq, MP
Minister for the Environment and Countryside—David Maclean, Esq, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
The Lord Strathclyde
Tony Baldry, Esq, MP
Robin Squire, Esq, MP

Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs—
SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt. Hon. Douglas Hurd, CBE, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE—
Minister for Overseas Development—The Rt. Hon. The Baroness Chalker of Wallasey
The Rt. Hon. Douglas Hogg, QC, MP
The Rt. Hon. Tristan Garel-Jones, MP
The Right Hon. Alastair Goodlad, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE—The Hon. Mark Lennox-Boyd, MP

Health—
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR HEALTH—The Rt. Hon. Virginia Bottomley, MP
MINISTER OF STATE—
Minister for Health—Dr. Brian Mawhinney, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
The Hon. Tom Sackville, MP
Tim Yeo, Esq, MP
The Baroness Cumberlege, CBE

Home Office—
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE HOME DEPARTMENT—The Rt. Hon. Kenneth Clarke, QC, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE—
The Rt. Hon. The Earl Ferrers
Peter Lloyd, Esq, MP
Michael Jack, Esq, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE—Charles Wardle, Esq, MP

Law Officers' Department—
ATTORNEY-GENERAL—The Rt. Hon. Sir Nicholas Lyell, QC, MP
SOLICITOR-GENERAL—Sir Derek Spencer, QC, MP

Lord Advocate's Department—
LORD-ADVOCATE—The Rt. Hon. The Lord Rodger of Earlsferry, QC
SOLICITOR-GENERAL FOR SCOTLAND—Thomas Dawson, Esq, QC

Lord Chancellor's Department—
LORD CHANCELLOR—The Rt. Hon. The Lord Mackay of Clashfern
PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY —John M. Taylor, Esq, MP

National Heritage—
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NATIONAL HERITAGE—The Rt. Hon. David Mellor, QC, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE—Robert Key, Esq, MP

Northern Ireland Office—
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND—The Rt. Hon. Sir Patrick Mayhew, QC, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE—
Robert Atkins, Esq, MP
Michael Mates, Esq, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
The Earl of Arran
Jeremy Hanley, Esq, MP

Paymaster General's Office—
PAYMASTER GENERAL—The Rt. Hon. Sir John Cope, MP

Privy Council Office—
LORD PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL AND LEADER OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS—The Rt. Hon. Tony Newton, OBE, MP
LORD PRIVY SEAL AND LEADER OF THE HOUSE OF LORDS—The Rt. Hon. The Lord Wakeham

Scottish Office—
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR SCOTLAND—The Rt. Hon. Ian Lang, MP
MINISTER OF STATE—The Rt. Hon. The Lord Fraser of Carmyllie, QC
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
Lord James Douglas-Hamilton, MP
Allan Stewart, Esq, MP
Sir Hector Monro, MP

Social Security—
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR SOCIAL SECURITY—The Rt. Hon. Peter Lilley, MP
MINISTER OF STATE—
Minister for Social Security and Disabled People—The Rt. Hon. Nicholas Scott, MBE, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
The Lord Henley
Miss Ann Widdecombe, MP
Alistair Burt, Esq, MP

Trade and Industry—
PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD OF TRADE (SECRETARY OF STATE FOR TRADE AND INDUSTRY)—The Rt. Hon. Michael Heseltine, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE—
Minister for Industry—The Rt. Hon. Tim Sainsbury, MP
Minister for Trade—Richard Needham, Esq, MP
Minister for Energy—Tim Eggar, Esq, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE FOR CORPORATE AFFAIRS—Neil Hamilton, Esq, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE FOR TECHNOLOGY—Edward Leigh, Esq, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE FOR CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND SMALL FIRMS—The Baroness Denton, CBE

Transport—
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR TRANSPORT—The Rt. Hon. John MacGregor, OBE, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE—
Minister for Aviation and Shipping—The Rt. Hon. The Earl of Caithness
Minister for Public Transport—Roger Freeman, Esq, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
Kenneth Carlisle, Esq, MP (Minister for Roads and Traffic)
Steve Norris, Esq, MP (Minister for Transport in London)

Treasury—

PRIME MINISTER, FIRST LORD OF THE TREASURY AND MINISTER FOR THE CIVIL SERVICE—The Rt. Hon. John Major, MP
CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER—The Rt. Hon. Norman Lamont, MP
CHIEF SECRETARY—The Rt. Hon. Michael Portillo, MP
FINANCIAL SECRETARY—Stephen Dorrell, Esq, MP
PAYMASTER GENERAL—The Rt. Hon. Sir John Cope, MP
ECONOMIC SECRETARY—Anthony Nelson, Esq, MP
PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY—The Rt. Hon. Richard Ryder, OBE, MP
LORDS COMMISSIONERS—
Greg Knight, Esq, MP
Irvine Patnick, Esq, OBE, MP
Nicholas Baker, Esq, MP
Timothy Wood, Esq, MP
Timothy Boswell, Esq, MP
ASSISTANT WHIPS—
Timothy Kirkhope, Esq, MP
David Davis, Esq, MP
Andrew Mackay, Esq, MP
Robert G. Hughes, Esq, MP
James Arbuthnot, Esq, MP

Welsh Office—

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR WALES—The Rt. Hon. David Hunt, MBE, MP
MINISTER OF STATE—The Rt. Hon. Sir Wyn Roberts, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE—Gwilym Jones, Esq, MP

Her Majesty's Household—

LORD CHAMBERLAIN—The Rt. Hon. The Earl of Airlie, KT, GCVO
LORD STEWARD—The Viscount Ridley, TD
MASTER OF THE HORSE—The Lord Somerleyton
TREASURER—David Heathcoat-Amory, Esq, MP
COMPTROLLER—David Lightbown, Esq, MP
VICE-CHAMBERLAIN—Sydney Chapman, Esq, MP
CAPTAIN OF THE HONOURABLE CORPS OF GENTLEMEN-AT-ARMS—The Rt. Hon. The Lord Hesketh
CAPTAIN OF THE QUEEN'S BODYGUARD OF THE YEOMEN OF THE GUARD—The Earl of Strathmore and Kinghorne
LORDS IN WAITING—The Viscount Long, The Viscount Astor, The Viscount St. Davids, The Viscount Goschen
BARONESS IN WAITING—The Rt. Hon. The Baroness Trumpington

SECOND CHURCH ESTATES COMMISSIONER, REPRESENTING CHURCH COMMISSIONERS—The Rt. Hon. Michael Alison, MP

HOUSE OF COMMONS

PRINCIPAL OFFICERS AND OFFICIALS

THE SPEAKER—Miss Betty Boothroyd, MP

CHAIRMAN OF WAYS AND MEANS—Michael Morris, Esq, MP

FIRST DEPUTY CHAIRMAN OF WAYS AND MEANS—Geoffrey Lofthouse, Esq, MP

SECOND DEPUTY CHAIRMAN OF WAYS AND MEANS—Dame Janet Fookes, MP

CHAIRMEN'S PANEL—

HOUSE OF COMMONS COMMISSION—

SECRETARY OF THE COMMISSION—

BOARD OF MANAGEMENT—

Sir Clifford Boulton, KCB (Chairman), Sir Alan Urwick, KCVO, CMG, D. J. T. Englefield, J. Rodda, FCA, I. D. Church, Mrs. S. J. Harrison

SECRETARY OF THE BOARD OF MANAGEMENT—B. A. Wilson

OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

SPEAKER'S SECRETARY—P. J. Kitcatt, CB

ASSISTANT SECRETARY TO THE SPEAKER—Mrs. M. E. Thomson

TRAINBEARER—D. J. Lord

DEPUTY TRAINBEARER—P. L. Warwick

DIARY SECRETARY—Mrs. S. Norvell

SPEAKER'S CHAPLAIN—Rev. Canon D. C. Gray, TD, PhD

SPEAKER'S COUNSEL—H. Knorpel, CB, QC, G. E. Gammie, CB, QC

ASSISTANT TO SPEAKER'S COUNSEL—P. Harvey, CB

OFFICE OF THE CHAIRMAN OF WAYS AND MEANS

SECRETARY TO THE CHAIRMAN OF WAYS AND MEANS—Ms. P. A. Helme

DEPARTMENT OF THE CLERK OF THE HOUSE

CLERK OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS—Sir Clifford Boulton, KCB

CLERK ASSISTANT—D. W. Limon

CLERK OF COMMITTEES—J. F. Sweetman, CB, TD

PRINCIPAL CLERKS—
W. R. McKay (Public Bills)
C. B. Winnifrith (Table Office)
R. B. Sands (Select Committees)
G. Cubie (Overseas Office)
A. J. Hastings (Journal Office)
R. J. Willoughby (Private Bills)
D. G. Millar (Select Committees)
M. R. Jack, PhD (Standing Committees)
R. W. G. Wilson (Financial Committees)
W. A. Proctor (Domestic Committees)

DEPUTY PRINCIPAL CLERKS—S. A. L. Panton, Mrs. J. Sharpe, Ms. A. Milner-Barry, F. A. Cranmer, R. J. Rogers, C. R. M. Ward, PhD, Ms. H. E. Irwin, D. W. N. Doig, A. Sandall, MLitt, D. L. Natzler, E. P. Silk, A. R. Kennon, D. W. Robson, L. C. Laurence Smyth, S. J. Patrick, D. J. Gerhold, D. F. Harrison, S. J. Priestley, A. H. Doherty, P. A. Evans, R. I. S. Phillips

SENIOR CLERKS—C. J. Poyser, R. G. James, Ms. P. A. Helme, D. R. Lloyd, R. A. Lambert, B. M. Hutton, J. S. Benger, DPhil, Miss E. C. Samson, N. P. Walker, M. D. Hamlyn, J. M. Hope (acting), H. R. Neilson (acting), M. J. Reeves (acting), D. Steel (acting)

CLERKS OF DOMESTIC COMMITTEES—K. J. Brown, P. G. Moon

ASSISTANT CLERKS—P. C. Seaward, DPhil, C. G. Lee, C. D. Stanton, A. Y. A. Azad, C. A. Shaw, P. M. Hensher, Ms. L. M. Gardner, F. J. Reid

SENIOR EXECUTIVE OFFICERS—G. E. Clayton, Miss R. J. Challis, S. D. Barrett

HIGHER EXECUTIVE OFFICERS—L. L. Kaye, A. P. Hubner, Miss S. J. Fox, Mrs. P. Fisher, F. McShane, J. D. Whatley, M. Clark, Miss A. M. Loader, Miss F. L. Allingham, Mrs. L. M. Nugent, J. A. L. Dresner, M. P. Oxborough, N. P. Wright, Ms. C. M. Genis

SPECIALIST ASSISTANTS—E. Thompson, J. K. Wheatley, Miss S. Phipps, PhD, S. Smith, A. J. Wood, Miss C. M. French, Ms. C. L. Auchterlonie

EDITORIAL SUPERVISOR OF THE VOTE—B. Tidball, DEPUTY—Miss L. Lewis, ASSISTANTS—Miss B. Balcomb, J. Puricelli, K. B. Wood, P. D. Howlett, Mrs. L. R. Shade, P. A. Jack, P. L. J. Sullivan

EXAMINERS OF PETITIONS FOR PRIVATE BILLS—R. J. Willoughby, B. P. Keith

REGISTRAR OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS—R. B. Sands

TAXING OFFICER—R. J. Willoughby

SUPERVISOR OF BROADCASTING—J. F. Grist (temporary)

TECHNICAL CO-ORDINATOR (BROADCASTING)—R. Longman, OBE (temporary)

SUPERINTENDING CLERK—R. A. Broomfield

CHIEF OFFICE CLERKS—Miss D. E. Symes, J. Hole, Miss E. Segal, R. W. A. Barrand, A. Catinella, Mrs. D. B. Nelson, Miss C. A. Benger

DEPARTMENT OF THE SERJEANT AT ARMS

SERJEANT AT ARMS—Sir Alan Urwick, KCVO, CMG

DEPUTY SERJEANT AT ARMS—P. N. W. Jennings

ASSISTANT SERJEANT AT ARMS—M. J. A. Cummins

DEPUTY ASSISTANT SERJEANTS AT ARMS—P. A. J. Wright, J. F. Collins

CLERK IN CHARGE—Miss S. J. Scott Thomson

ADMISSION ORDER OFFICE—A. Chipperfield, BEM, Mrs. S. J. Warren, A. J. Spencer

PRINCIPAL DOORKEEPER—R. H. Usher

SECOND PRINCIPAL DOORKEEPER—C. E. Gray

SENIOR DOORKEEPERS—R. A. F. Chapman, J. D. Garnett, J. C. W. Cooper, D. Shiels

HEAD OFFICE KEEPER—M. Bryant

SENIOR OFFICE KEEPERS—V. M. Roccia, C. R. Harris, BEM, K. R. Dickason

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH MANAGER—Mrs. M. Mainland

DIRECTOR OF WORKS—H. P. Webber

DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF WORKS—B. C. Sewell

PRINCIPAL WORKS OFFICERS—A. Makepeace, B. R. Hall, J. Whyte, R. Bentley, M. Moone, G. Goode, J. F. Moore

SENIOR PROFESSIONAL TECHNICAL OFFICERS—J. Stone, S. Howard, B. O'Boyle, W. Knowles

DEPARTMENT OF THE LIBRARY

LIBRARIAN—D. J. T. Englefield

DEPUTY LIBRARIAN—Miss J. B. Tanfield

LIBRARY AND RESEARCH—

ASSISTANT LIBRARIANS (Heads of Division)—S. Z. Young, Miss P. J. Baines, B.Litt

DEPUTY ASSISTANT LIBRARIANS (Heads of Section)—K. G. Cuninghame, Mrs. J. M. Wainwright, FIInfSc, C. C. Pond, PhD, Mrs. C. B. Andrews, R. C. Clements, Mrs. J. M. Lourie, R. J. Ware, DPhil, C. R. Barclay, Mrs. J. M. Fiddick

LIBRARY CLERKS, SENIOR—Mrs. H. R. Coates, Ms. F. Poole, Mrs. C. M. Gillie, Ms. C. E. Nield, R. J. Twigger, T. N. Edmonds, R. J. Cracknell, FSS, Miss O. M. Gay, Miss B. McInnes, Miss M. Baber, Ms. A. Muir, Mrs. H. V. Holden ALA, Mrs. G. L. Allen, Mrs. P. Carling, Miss J. Seaton, FLA

ASSISTANT—A. J. L. Crompton, Mrs. K. Greener, Miss P. Strickland, Miss V. A. Miller, Ms. N. R. Donlon, Ms. H. M. Jeffs, J. R. Lunn, PhD, R. S. Dewdney, Ms. L. E. Sloman, DPhil, Ms. W. T. Wilson, Miss N. J. Chedgey, M. Nawaz, P. Bowers, PhD, M. P. Hillyard, T. E. Dodd, A. C. Seely, Dr. A. Davies (period), E. Wood (temporary)

SENIOR EXECUTIVE OFFICERS—S. A. Wise, Ms. P. A. Bozdan

SENIOR LIBRARY EXECUTIVES—K. N. H. Parry, ALA, Miss C. E. Fretten, ALA, Mrs. P. V. Wiles, Miss I. O. White, ALA, G. Haig (acting)

EDUCATION OFFICER—Mrs. C. Weeds; ASSISTANT—Mrs. C. C. O'Connor

HIGHER EXECUTIVE OFFICERS—E. L. V. MacGregor, Ms. B. A. Rowlands, ALA, J. P Brevitt

HIGHER LIBRARY EXECUTIVES—J. A. Prince, MLS, Mrs. D. W. Clark, Miss M. H. Fletcher, Mrs. P. E. Cook, ALA, Ms. H. Armstrong, Miss E. J. Jones, ALA, Miss G. L. Cooper, Mrs. E. H. Riley, ALA, Mrs. F. M. Ward, Mrs. M. A. Azim, ALA, Ms. F. Whittle, T. C. Holmes, C. M. Sear, Ms. J. B. Hall, ALA, R. Freebury, ALA, A. D. Parker, ALA, Ms. Z. A. Smallwood (acting)

EDITOR, WEEKLY BULLETIN—D. B. Inns

LIBRARY EXECUTIVES—P. E. M. Ward, Mrs. J. M. Smith, ALA, Miss J. Lyall, ALA, Miss C. Owens, Miss C. M. Blair, ALA, S. A. H. Jones, Miss D. J. Gillings, Miss L. K. Fleming, Mrs. J. Priestley, Miss C. Chambers, Miss P. Rix, Ms. A. Crook, Miss S. Pepin, ALA, P. C. Tomes, R. O. Steeden, G. G. Newell

EXECUTIVE OFFICERS—Miss N. Harland, Mrs. A. J. H. Mara, D. A. Brown, M. Greenhill (Head Library Attendant), B. Smith, Ms. J. Fessey, A. J. Fuller, Miss J. M. Perkes, Mrs. H. Onyskiw, A. Clark, Miss A. Gual, Mrs. S. P. Sinclair, Ms. M A. Moulton, Miss N. M. Sutherland, Miss K. E. Susilovic (acting)

VOTE OFFICE—

DELIVERER OF THE VOTE—G. R. Russell

DEPUTY DELIVERER OF THE VOTE—H. C. Foster

ASSISTANT DELIVERER OF THE VOTE—O. B. T. Sweeney

BOOKSHOP MANAGER—C. D. Lister

SUPERINTENDING CLERKS—Mrs. S. Fuzio, B. G. Underwood, A. J. Ashton (Sales Office)

VOTE OFFICE ASSISTANTS—T. S. Wilson, G. E. Howard, C. P. Williams, P. Hannett, J. Harrington

DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION

DIRECTOR—J. Rodda, FCA

FEES OFFICE—

ACCOUNTANT—A. J. Lewis

DEPUTY ACCOUNTANT—A. R. Marskell

ASSISTANT ACCOUNTANTS—M. Fletcher, Mrs. G. Crowther

SENIOR EXECUTIVE OFFICERS—Mrs. D. C. Hill, N. P. Crawley

HIGHER EXECUTIVE OFFICERS—R. Gunn, M. J. H. Caswell, Mrs. G. M. Baker, Miss R. Harrison, Ms. M. R. Morris, G. L. Turner

EXECUTIVE OFFICERS—D. M. Allen, D. J. D. Woods, Ms. P. R. Mills, Miss S. V. A. Weaver, P. H. Olden, A. D. Rowlands, P. J. S. French, Miss T. D. Ruewell, C. J. Bumstead, Miss M. Oliver, Miss D. M. McGuire, Mrs. S. M. Chalmers, Miss D. O. McElderry, Mrs. C. J. Stockton (temporary), Miss L. C. Rostron (temporary), Miss B. Parekh (temporary)

FINANCE OFFICE—

SENIOR ASSISTANT ACCOUNTANT—M. J. Barram, IPFA, MBCS,

ASSISTANT ACCOUNTANTS—Miss M. M. McColl, R. H. A. Russell, ACMA

SENIOR EXECUTIVE OFFICER—Mrs. N. Norman

HIGHER EXECUTIVE OFFICERS—Mrs. J. S. Peach, Mrs. J. D. Mead, Miss A. Hatton (temporary)

EXECUTIVE OFFICERS—Miss D. E. Johnson, P. F. Dawson, Miss V. E. Wilson, R. A. P. Edwards

ESTABLISHMENTS OFFICE—

HEAD OF OFFICE—B. A. Wilson

DEPUTY HEAD OF OFFICE—J. A. Robb

SENIOR EXECUTIVE OFFICERS—V. H. Stocker, Miss P. J. Hurford

HIGHER EXECUTIVE OFFICER—M. Page

PERSONNEL OFFICE MANAGER—Miss J. Bremner (temporary)

PERSONNEL OFFICERS—Ms. C. L. Watson, Miss C. E. Jackson, Mrs. R. A. Baker, Mrs. A. McGuinn

COMPUTER OFFICE—

COMPUTER OFFICER—R. S. Morgan, FBCS, FIInfSc

NETWORK PLANNING OFFICER—J. Fishenden

ASSISTANT COMPUTER OFFICER—S. J. Lewis

SUPPORT MANAGER—Mrs. J. M. Cleveland

INTERNAL AUDITOR—A. A. Cameron

STAFF INSPECTOR—R. C. Collins

WELFARE OFFICER—Mrs. A. Mossop

DEPARTMENT OF THE OFFICIAL REPORT

EDITOR—I. D. Church

DEPUTY EDITOR—P. Walker

PRINCIPAL ASSISTANT EDITORS—R. V. Hadlow, J. Gourley, W. G. Garland, Miss H. A. Hales

ASSISTANT EDITORS—Ms. C. V. Grainger, Miss V. A. A. Clarke, Miss L. Sutherland, S. M. Hutchinson, C. Fogarty

COMMITTEE SUB-EDITORS—D. Crosswell, Mrs. A. Roberts, Miss V. A. Widgery, Mrs. H. J. G. Natzler, Miss M. Babington, Mrs. A. Street, L. Gilmore, Ms. G. Hardgrave, P. Oglethorpe, P. Hadlow, Miss C. Hanly, M. Watson, Ms. K. Stewart, J. Ransley, Mrs. E. J. Gregory

REPORTERS—Miss E. Morris, Ms. J. Dall, Mrs. P. Pickford, Miss K. Myers, Ms. J. Warrington, J. Robinson, Ms. D. Jones, Mrs. J. Symons, Mrs. J. L. Davies

PRINCIPAL TRANSCRIBER—D. N. Harrington, MBE

DEPUTY PRINCIPAL TRANSCRIBERS—Mrs. M. J. Harding, Miss J. Beck (acting)

IT PROJECT MANAGER—Miss J. L. Brown (temporary)

PRINCIPAL HANSARD ASSISTANT—Miss R. Washington

SENIOR HANSARD ASSISTANT—J. Brake

ANNUNCIATOR SUPERINTENDENT—G. Carpenter

REFRESHMENT DEPARTMENT

DIRECTOR OF CATERING SERVICES—Mrs. S. J. Harrison

ASSISTANT MANAGER—P. Gale, MHCIMA

PERSONNEL ADMINISTRATOR—Mrs. S. M. Nicholls, FHCIMA, MIPM

PERSONAL ASSISTANT—Mrs. A. G. Lunn

BANQUETING MANAGER—C. J. Griffiths

CATERING ACCOUNTANT—D. R. W. Wood, FCA

ASSISTANT CATERING ACCOUNTANT—Mrs. B. A. Langley

EXECUTIVE CHEF—I. Gabay, MBE

HEAD CELLARMAN—D. Balcombe

HEAD STOREMAN—A. E. Edmond

CATERING MANAGER, 1 PARLIAMENT STREET—Ms. S. Hovells, LHCIMA

SHORTHAND WRITER TO THE HOUSE—Mrs. E. M. C. Holland

HEAD OF SECURITY—Chief Superintendent G. K. Dark

COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER—A. Blake

POSTMASTER—J. Arnold

TRANSPORT MANAGER—J. W. Jones

THE PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

IN THE FIRST SESSION OF THE FIFTY-FIRST PARLIAMENT OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND
[WHICH OPENED 27 APRIL 1992]

FORTY-FIRST YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SIXTH SERIES **VOLUME 207**

FIRST VOLUME OF SESSION 1992-93

House of Commons

Monday 27 April 1992

The House being met; and it being the first day of the meeting of this Parliament, pursuant to Proclamation, SIR CLIFFORD JOHN BOULTON, KCB, *Clerk of the House of Commons,* DONALD WILLIAM LIMON, ESQUIRE, *Clerk Assistant, and* CHARLES BONIFACE WINNIFRITH, ESQUIRE, *Principal Clerk of the Table Office, attending in the House, and the other Clerks attending, according to their duty,* THOMAS STUART LEGG, ESQUIRE, CB, QC, *Clerk of the Crown in Chancery in Great Britain, delivered to the said* SIR CLIFFORD JOHN BOULTON *a book containing a list of the names of the Members returned to serve in this Parliament.*

Several of the Members repaired to their seats.

THE RIGHT HON. SIR EDWARD HEATH *took the Chair, pursuant to Standing Order No. 1 (Election of the Speaker).*

Message to attend the Lords Commissioners.

The House went; and a Commission having been read for opening and holding the Parliament, the Lords Commissioners directed the House to proceed to the Election of a Speaker, and to present the Speaker-Elect *tomorrow, in the House of Peers, for the Royal Approbation.*

And the House having returned:—

Election of Speaker

2.44 pm

Sir Edward Heath (Old Bexley and Sidcup): Before the House proceeds to the choice of a Speaker, it may be helpful for me to describe the procedure that is to be followed.

I shall first call for a candidate to be proposed and seconded, after which a debate may follow on that Question. At the end of the debate, the Member proposed may indicate his or her willingness to accept the office. At this point, an amendment may be proposed and seconded to leave out the first name and insert another name. A debate on that amendment may then follow, at the end of which the Member concerned may indicate his or her willingness to accept the office. The Question, That the amendment be made, will then be put.

If the amendment is carried, I shall then put the main Question, as amended, on which also a Division may take place. If the amendment is defeated, it will be possible for further amendments to be moved in the same manner as I have described for the first; or, if no amendment is forthcoming, the original Question will be put to the House. I call Sir Michael Neubert.

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives): On a point of order, Sir Edward. Could you explain in which order the candidates will be proposed to the House? Have you decided in which order the names will be chosen?

Sir Edward Heath: Sir Michael Neubert will propose the first candidate.

2.51 pm

Sir Michael Neubert (Romford): I beg to move,

That Mr. Peter Brooke do take the Chair of this House as Speaker.

No one recently elected or re-elected to this House and committed to parliamentary democracy, which has given freedom and stability to our country and so many countries around the world, will be likely to underestimate the importance of the purpose which brings us here to our first meeting of this new Parliament.

[Sir Michael Neubert]

Parliamentary democracy places a unique responsibility on the Speaker. I take this first opportunity to congratulate you, Sir Edward, on the signal honour conferred on you by Her Majesty in respect of your premiership and many other public services over so many years. I believe that it will not be the least important of your duties that today you preside as the new Father of the House over the election of our Speaker. This Parliament —if you will approve the metaphor, Sir Edward—will not be plain sailing.

Unusually, we have a choice of candidates. In particular, on the Conservative Benches, it seems that we have an embarrassment of riches. *[Laughter.]* Whatever the House eventually decides we are all obliged to choose between friends and Members, hon. and right hon. alike —an invidious start to the new Session. The office of Speaker, once secured, is all-powerful in this Chamber. It is the Speaker who holds the key to the opportunity of one's next brilliant speech or incisive question. Therefore, proposing who should be the next Speaker is a perilous enterprise. I am all too well aware that, if I get this wrong, I may never catch the Speaker's eye again, but a choice has to be made and my choice is my right hon. Friend the Member for City of London and Westminster, South (Mr. Brooke).

Since my right hon. Friend's entry into the House 15 years ago as a Back Bencher in opposition, the Chamber has had an essential magnetism for him. Subsequently he has filled with distinction a number of ministerial offices, culminating with Cabinet responsibility for Northern Ireland, which is among the most onerous and difficult offices in the Government of the United Kingdom. Throughout that time he has always been ready to answer to the House—of the primacy of Parliament in his mind there can be no doubt.

As on earlier occasions, we would be enhancing the office of Speaker and the standing of the House by electing a Member who served as one of Her Majesty's Secretaries of State. There have been Speakers of this House since 1258. It is a long line which encompasses much of our history. Since the second world war the Speaker has always come from the majority party in the House at the time.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): Will the hon. Member give way?

Sir Michael Neubert: I make no special point about that. The House is free to establish its custom and practice in this matter as in others. However, in my experience during 18 years, it has worked well.

The independence of the Speaker has been conclusively demonstrated on several significant occasions. Governments have often been discomfited by the Speaker's ruling. There is no reason to believe that if my right hon. Friend were to take the Chair he would be any less forthright in defence of Back Benchers' rights or any less jealous of the Speaker's independence than his immediate predecessors have been.

There are some Members who might, with less than Christian charity and compassion, point to my right hon. Friend's time in the Whips Office, but I hope that any such doubts might have been put aside by the example of the previous Speaker, himself a former deputy Chief Whip. In the dying days of the last Parliament when he was accused of favouring his friends, he snapped back, "I have no friends." That is the truth of it. The office of Speaker is the loneliest job in Parliament. Its holder is required to sacrifice that camaraderie which means so much to the rest of us. Students of the Whips tend to concentrate on the darker, cloacal arts of the Whip's trade, forgetting that it gives essential understanding and training in the procedures and workings of the House, which will be a considerable asset to anyone in the Chair.

My right hon. Friend is steeped in the traditions of this place. Both his parents were parliamentarians. Parliament is in his blood. He has a grasp of history which would guide him if he were to take his place in that long line of Speakers. He would bring dignity, erudition and wit to the exercise of the office and the stature to ensure firm handling of our often stormy debates.

In personal terms my right hon. Friend has always been agreeable and affable in his dealings with Members in all parts of the House. He will be an admirable ambassador for us outside. Finally, he has the strength, stamina and family support needed for the task. In short, my right hon. Friend has, in good measure, all those qualities for which we look in a Speaker. I commend him to the House.

2.57 pm

Sir Thomas Arnold (Hazel Grove): I rise to second the nomination of my right hon. Friend the Member for City of London and Westminster, South (Mr. Brooke). He would make an admirable and excellent Speaker of the House of Commons.

The House has come to realise the pre-eminent value of fairness in Mr. Speaker, and my right hon. Friend, not least in the discharge of his duties in Northern Ireland, has shown himself to be fair and even handed. Those are qualities which the House of Commons rightly treasures.

Sooner or later in this Parliament, as I understand it, the Government will introduce proposals to change the Standing Orders, hours of sitting and other procedural matters of the House. It is perfectly true that when I used to work for my right hon. Friend he let me go home early, but I suspect that the changes that the Government have in mind will be judged not simply by whether they make our lives easier, but by whether they protect the rights of the House of Commons and of Members herein.

My right hon. Friend will be anxious to achieve that protection and would be impartial between the parties. As newcomers to the House will recognise quickly, the impartiality of Mr. Speaker is one of the essential ingredients and guarantees of our liberties.

On a personal note, and without wishing to sound impertinent, my right hon. Friend also looks the part. Indeed, he is famous for his bushy eyebrows, so much so that I have sometimes wondered what he is thinking. His qualities will stand him in good stead in dealing with over-enthusiastic Back Benchers and the over-mighty denizens of the Front Bench. I have great pleasure in supporting the motion.

3 pm

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): As there is no other occasion in the parliamentary calendar when one can say anything sensible about the operation of the Chair without implying criticism of the occupant of the Chair, which, as

we all know, means a substantive motion, and, as we are extremely reluctant to table substantive motions against the Speaker, is it appropriate to ask two questions?

First, what can we hope for from an incoming Speaker in terms of a far more lenient attitude towards private notice questions? The decision whether to accept a private notice question often can alter events outside the House. The taste and decision of the Speaker is all-important in that. Whoever the next Speaker is, may I ask him or her to take a more lenient view towards granting private notice questions to those on the Back Benches? There is a feeling among some of us that private notice questions on the very same subjects that are granted to the Front Bench are often not granted to the Back Benches. I am speaking up for the rights of Back Benchers and for the merits of what they are proposing at least to be entertained by the Speaker.

Secondly, I should like to ask about the Speaker's attitude through the usual channels—he or she plays a very important part in the usual channels—to whether the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, who now speaks for science—a subject much under-represented in the House of Commons—is to get just 10 minutes spatchcocked into the middle of a Monday or whether science will be treated as a proper Department of State with a 40-minute slot at Question Time.

I have known every Speaker since Sir Harry Hylton-Foster. The personal qualities of a Speaker and his or her attitude towards Members are all important. That is why I hope that, when the choice comes, we will make the right choice for Back Benchers and dissenters in the House.

3.3 pm

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): I hoped that the hon. Member for Romford (Sir M. Neubert) would give way to me, when I would have made my point concisely. I shall make it as briefly as I can now.

The hon. Member talked about the Speakership of this House going back to 1258. As he will find when the *Official Report* is published, this will be the 51st Parliament of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, which goes back only to 1801. That is not only an important historical point; it is also an important political point. If whoever occupies the Chair believes that this House is simply the continuation of the Parliament of England, he or she has another think coming.

It is important to recognise the important Scottish dimension when the Government, albeit having received some modest increase in support in Scotland, were rejected by 75 per cent. of the Scottish electorate. One would hope that, when the right hon. Member for City of London and Westminster, South (Mr. Brooke) or anyone else who is proposed occupies the Speaker's Chair, he or she will be sensitive to the very different political situation that exists in Scotland.

3.4 pm

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): You, Sir Edward, and I have sat in 13 Parliaments under seven Speakers, and I think that we are the last remaining Members of the House who saw Attlee and Churchill at the Dispatch Box and heard the last King's Speech from the throne. We were elected in the same year; you are the Father of the House and I was then the baby of the House. I must now be the uncle of the House, and it is in that capacity that I want to speak.

My hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) introduced, in my opinion, the most important element into this debate—the Speakership itself. As a young Member I once moved a motion of censure on the Speaker—a daring thing to do, for which I paid a heavy price. I did it because he refused me an emergency debate on the possibility of military action in Oman. Also, I was kept out by Harry Hylton-Foster on the ground that I was a peer, so I have had conflicts with one or two other Speakers as well.

Before we come to the names—there is a candidate whom I strongly wish to support—I wish to stress that this is a House of Commons matter. Previously, Speakers have been chosen by patronage, nudging and winks, through the usual channels, which are the most polluted waterways in the world. All the candidates who have been mentioned have exceptional qualities—I am not arguing about that—but the House should remember that the reason that we regard the Speaker as important is that in this Chamber—or where it was 450 years ago this year—Mr. Speaker Lenthall refused to bow to the king when he wanted to arrest five Members. He said, using the famous phrase:

> "May it please Your Majesty, I have neither eyes to see, nor Tongue to Speak in this Place, but as the House is pleased to direct me, whose servant I am here".

Therefore, if we are talking about the Speakership, we must bring it up to date and ask where executive power lies now and how the House can be strong in defending it. We need a Speaker who will defend the legislature against the Executive, and defend the electors against those who abuse power, whether it be state power or private power.

The power of Charles I has long gone and his successors have no power left, but in that 450 years state power has grown enormously in many ways. For example—and I am looking at the Prime Minister—all the prerogatives that Charles had are now in the Prime Minister's hands. You, Sir Edward, know it yourself. The Prime Minister can take the country to war without consulting Parliament—he did. He can sign treaties and choose archbishops without consulting Parliament. He can create peers without consulting Parliament—the previous 10 Prime Ministers have created almost 900 Members of the other place without doing so. The Prime Minister can, without consulting Parliament, agree to laws being made in secret in the Council of Ministers in Brussels that take precedence over our laws. He also has other powers. Therefore, the divine right of kings is alive and well in the person of the Prime Minister of the day.

Other powers have grown: the City of London votes every day, and so will the European central bank, to decide the policy of this Government and every other Government. We are no longer even the primary source of debate, as television has taken it over. Mr. Speaker Sissons and Mr. Speaker Paxman presumed to tell us what the nation should think. When I first came here the Division Lobbies and polling stations were supposed to be the places where the nation's will was expressed, but now the arrogant pollsters—the inaccurate pollsters—presume to tell us what the nation thinks. I say to whoever succeeds to the Chair that democracy is being bypassed, and the responsibility for that rests largely with the House of Commons and all the parties which have allowed it to happen.

[Mr. Tony Benn]

We have some powers: we can speak freely. Our speeches are printed in *Hansard*—the only newspaper not owned by Rupert Murdoch. We also have access to television, without being interrogated in the star chamber by David Dimbleby. But our most powerful weapon is Mr. Speaker, and I wish to speak about the Speakership.

Apart from keeping order, which is not as difficult as it might appear, the Speaker can allow or disallow parliamentary questions to Ministers, and thus expose or protect them; accept or refuse closure motions, which can prolong or stop debates; select or reject Back-Bench motions or amendments, and thus deny a minority view in the House from ever being put in the Lobbies; permit or deny private notice questions or emergency debates; call or not call individual Members; and give or withhold precedence to Privy Councillors, which is the source of much anger. He can determine which Bills are hybrid and which are not; use a casting vote if there is a tie; recall the Commons in a recess—a formidable power—in the event of some international crisis; certify a money Bill; and rule on matters of privilege.

That is the office which we are discussing and, although the vote will resolve who occupies the Chair, we must pay attention to the office itself. Every Member present brings his or her own experience and convictions to the House. We were not elected to be robots, trembling before the party Whips. Ultimately, we are responsible to ourselves and our consciences. All party leaders get it wrong sometimes and, often, one lone voice may turn out to have got it right. We must speak out more plainly for the people we represent, many of whom have no confidence in the House. The hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) questioned whether this is a representative assembly. That is now on the agenda, whether we agree or not. Ethnic communities and those who poured into the polling stations but could not vote because they did not pay their poll tax do not feel represented in the House. Others can live abroad for 25 years and still have a vote without even being asked to pay poll tax.

The point is that we must not have another cosy little election for a Speaker without recognising that these are difficult times. I believe—I have been here for a long time—that we need a reforming Speaker. We modernise everything but the Speakership goes on. We need a Speaker to call more Members from minority parties and more minority Members from other parties. We need more debates on emergency matters—why should the television channels cover matters that we cannot discuss even when the business of the House is only a trifling amendment on a Government Bill? I want a Speaker who will demand better conditions for the staff who work in the Palace of Westminster, including comprehensive and complete child care for the many parents who have come to the House: I should like a Speaker who will allow Westminster Hall to be used so that we do not leave pensioners freezing outside in the winter when they come to lobby their Members of Parliament. I should like the Strangers Gallery to be renamed the "Electors Gallery". We have never caught up with 1832 when this place was done out.

I should also like a Speaker who does not wear a wig every day, because it is so intimidating—*[Interruption.]* I know that Mr. Speaker Weatherill was popular on television, but many people watching thought that he was appearing in the High Court. We need a Speaker who will defend the rights of those represented here.

Although I am not speaking for my hon. Friend the Member for West Bromwich, West (Miss Boothroyd), whom I support, I hope that she and the other candidates are listening. If Parliament is to survive, it must be a workshop, not a museum. For one reason or another, the years ahead will be very troubled. There will not only be difficulties in the House, but social unrest—*[Interruption.]* I am giving my opinion to the House I thought that that was what the House was famous for. I do not believe that democracy can be taken for granted anywhere. We would do well to elect a Speaker who will help to do the difficult task that falls to those of us who have the honour to serve in this House.

3.14 pm

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): I shall address myself entirely to the House of Commons and not to anything outside.

It is vital that the House should elect as Speaker somebody who believes in the integrity of the House of Commons and is prepared to safeguard the ability of the House to monitor the Executive. Year by year, the House's ability to monitor the Executive has been increasingly eroded. We want a Speaker who is committed to the House and to its ability to hold Governments to account.

We want a Minister—*[Interruption.]* We want a Speaker who is prepared to stand up for the rights of the only organisation within the House that can effectively monitor the Government, and that is the Select Committee system. *[Interruption.]* Remarks that are not unexpected are being made by Conservative Back Benchers. Perhaps too many people come to the House merely seeking ministerial office. *[Interruption.]* Some of us never anticipate the call. We do not sit by telephones waiting for the call to ministerial office, but we believe in the integrity of the House. The speech of the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) reflected a deep concern, which is felt by the people of this country, that Back Benchers are not adequately safeguarded in this place and that the ability of this place to monitor the Executive is not powerful enough.

In considering the nominations for Speaker, I hope that the House will be proud of its power, authority and integrity and will elect a Speaker who will honour, cherish and safeguard the authority of the House of Commons itself.

Sir Edward Heath: Mr. Peter Brooke has been proposed and seconded, and I give him the opportunity to submit himself to the House if he so wishes.

3.16 pm

Mr. Peter Brooke (City of London and Westminster, South): I am grateful to my hon. Friends who have proposed and seconded me in terms much more generous than I warrant. I join my hon. Friend the Member for Romford (Sir M. Neubert) in congratulating you, Sir Edward, not only on the office you now hold in the House, but on being elevated to the Order of the Garter.

Once upon a time, I was the first ever headhunter in the United Kingdom and widely condemned as an interfering reformer of ancient and traditional practices. Now, 30 years on, I am content in the knowledge that a commercial

acorn has become a respectable forest of oaks. A characteristic of a headhunter is a preoccupation with the specifications of a job. One such specification for the task of Speaker was written by the great Delane, the 19th century editor of *The Times* when it was called "The Thunderer". It began:

"Imperturbable good temper, tact, patience and urbanity and an absence of bitter partisanship in his previous career."

Confronted by such a litany of perfection, any candidate must be cowed into instant humility. I shall essay, but not achieve, the standard of humility set by King Lobengula of the Matabele whose first loyal address to Queen Victoria began with the words:

"We who are but as the lice on the edge of Your Majesty's blanket . . ."

These remarks will be brief but they cannot help being personal. I shall try to avoid the example of the peer at the turn of the century whose memoirs were held up for three weeks because the printers had run out of the capital I. I cannot, however, promise entire abstinence.

My father entered Parliament when I was four years of age; he sat in both Houses of it. Both my parents sat in the Upper House. My first visit here, at the age of nine, occurred, lugubriously to report, on the day that the then Mr. Speaker FitzRoy died, which I suppose constitutes a thread of continuity.

More germanely perhaps, my forebear, Mr. Speaker Brooke, was the first Member for the City of London, which is part of my constituency, to be Speaker while the City's Member. He lasted five weeks in the summer of 1554 before deciding in the reign of Bloody Mary, and in an office which then often led to summary execution, that discretion was the better part of valour. I risk not following his example in saying to the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) that the events he described of Mr. Speaker Lenthall occurred 350 years ago rather than 450.

Delane's specifications apart, no one should be a candidate for Speakership unless he admires and reveres this ancient House, and that I can plead to do. A candidate must also be confident that his spouse understands what will be involved in the roles that both will need to play. My wife has experienced the representational life of a Minister's wife and has a vivid and willing understanding of the role that falls to a Speaker's wife.

I had recent grateful occasion to know the temper of the House towards me in a personal capacity. That event occurred, however, while I was a Minister. I have had, therefore, to ask myself whether it was appropriate for someone to allow his name to be proposed for this high office so soon after leaving government. That will be for others to decide. For myself, the last such case was that in 1959 of Sir Harry Hylton-Foster, then the Solicitor-General, who was the most recent Member for my constituency to be Speaker. His being a Law Officer was regarded as being unpartisan and therefore to admit of the transition. The Northern Ireland Office is similarly unpartisan, at least between the two main parties. As I say, it will be for others to decide what is proper. I can only say on a personal note that, as when I started that lonely and innovative business 30 years ago, I shall be my own man.

I hold all the other candidates whose names I have heard in the highest regard. Some feel that competition for the office is in some sense improper. For myself I count it as an index of the importance that the House attaches to the Speakership, and I count it as an honour to have been considered at least worthy of nomination. I am grateful to all those who have encouraged me to stand.

3.22 pm

Mr. John Biffen (Shropshire, North): I beg to move, as an amendment to the Question, to leave out "Mr. Peter Brooke" and insert instead thereof "Miss Betty Boothroyd".

I wish to associate myself with those who have congratulated you, Sir Edward, most warmly on the award of Knight of the Garter and also becoming Father of the House. In the capacity of Father, you will recall the occasion in 1951 when there was a contested election between Mr. Morrison and Major Milner. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Romford (Sir M. Neubert), when he talked about the contest leading to an invidious start to this occasion, was right in identifying the degree of ambience that there is on such an occasion. I believe that the House has reacted far more robustly and in a far more adult fashion to the matter today than it did in the embarrassment of some 40 years ago. That is a tribute not only to the House but to those who are offering their names for the great post of Speakership.

I say only this in respect of my right hon. Friend the Member for City of London and Westminster, South (Mr. Brooke), whom I am seeking to exclude by means of the amendment. It has been a privilege to serve as a supporter of a Minister who has shown such courage and courtesy in one of the most testing offices of state. I know that similar qualities could be secured for each and every candidate. So we proceed to the business of deciding on the Speakership in, I believe, a healthy rather than an embarrassed atmosphere. I think that we can echo the words that were spoken in 1951 by Clement Attlee. After the decision had been made, he said:

"We have had a vote, and although the House has the right to exercise its choice, when its choice has been made that choice becomes Speaker of the whole House."—[*Official Report*, 31 October 1951; Vol. 493, c. 22.]

That spirit will guide us today.

I intend to say a few words about the office of Speaker and the tasks that are required of him. As has been said by the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell), this is one of the few occasions when one can, in a reasonably free atmosphere, talk about the office of Speaker. By far the most important aspect of it is contained in what has almost become a theme remark in today's wider publicity—"Order, order"—for it is order, the securing of the framework of debate, which is absolutely essential for the freedom and the effective running of this House of Commons: not just to provide the circumstances for agreement between the exalted.

Harsh words about "the usual channels" were offered, characteristically, by the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn). I regard "the usual channels" as almost an art form. Without their effective operation this place would be in a complete shambles within a very short time indeed.

The task of the Speaker is to require balance and, above all, to see that dissent is not the prerogative of the lilac establishment in the Reform club or of those who try to essay a permissible range of opinions. Dissent is very often the individual attitude, the pioneering determination, of Members of this House. Every time that we come to decide who is to be the Speaker there should be the spectral

[Mr. John Biffen]

presence of those like Alan Herbert or Eleanor Rathbone to remind us that when individual Members use this place for the pursuit of social or other objectives the Speaker has an absolutely crucial role to play. When we make the choice I am sure that we shall have to resolve—I do not say this in the ringing tones of the right hon. Member for Chesterfield—the dilemma that dissent, like truth, is many sided and, in my view, is often many splendoured. That is a very important consideration for the Speaker in fulfilling his task.

Mention has been made of Speaker Lenthall. I suppose that that was fairly predictable: it is almost the clause four of Speakership. I have always been much fascinated by the eyesight problems that plagued Speaker Lenthall. It clearly has engaged the affection of successive Parliaments. Indeed, we have a Westminster doctrine—the doctrine of constructive myopia: whenever it becomes more suitable not to see rather than to see things, there is great merit in not seeing them. I commend that view to the House about the choice of Speaker—that when we consider whoever is the candidate for Speaker we have total myopia about party affiliation, about whether he belongs to the party that has won an election, about whether he is of a party that did not have the Speakership in the preceding Parliament. If we have as our overwhelming consideration the test of merit, we shall not merely have made a valuable step forward but be vindicating the Back-Bench role in the House of Commons at a time when it is most valuable.

The hon. Member for West Bromwich, West (Miss Boothroyd), whom I am most happy to commend to the House, has been here for nearly 20 years. Most of that time was spent on the Back Benches, learning the endless frustrations of that kind of life. Those of us who are looking for fraternity in suffering will therefore well consider her merits. Also, and providentially, the hon. Lady's innocence was tempered by service in the Fagin's den known as the Labour Whips' Office. As it now seems that service in the Whips' Office is almost a sine qua non of consideration for the Speakership, that tells us something about either the Whips' Office or the modern Speakership.

I commend to the House the fact that, since 1987, the hon. Lady has been Deputy Speaker. During that time she has excercised the role, often in difficult circumstances, with authority and with courtesy. If I wanted to make the recommendation, I should say merely, "Look at the record; look at the experience." Alas, that is known to only part of the House this afternoon because many Members are here for the first time today. They must take it on recommendation and not on experience. Either way, the hon. Lady's service as Deputy Speaker was an apprenticeship carried out with great skill, and it is a recommendation for the Speakership.

3.30 pm

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): I support the amendment most warmly. I begin by saying how delighted I am to see you, Sir Edward, in your new role as Father of the House. I am not sure whether that word encompasses the Mother of the House. Whatever your status, Sir Edward, you are most warmly welcomed.

We have heard today of many of the important things which people consider that the role of Speaker represents. I have no difficulty in speaking of the warmth, intelligence and wit of the hon. Member for West Bromwich, West (Miss Boothroyd), who has been known to us for some time as our Deputy Speaker. It is important when we decide such an important question that we remember that her apprenticeship has been long.

I have known the hon. Lady since she began working —dare I say it—for a certain political office then not far away, in Smith square. She worked for one of the most illustrious general secretaries, who happened to be my father. She was highly thought of, not least because my father was known to say that if they were any damned good they went and, if they were no damned good, one could not get rid of them. The hon. Lady, of course, was one of those who moved on.

Like many women, she had to fight hard to get into the House. Hers has not been an easy apprenticeship. She fought a number of parliamentary seats. She worked very hard, not only for other members of the Labour party, but for elected representatives generally. During her time as a Member of the House she has represented the House in NATO and in the non-elected European Parliament. Indeed, she has served her apprenticeship in the Labour Whips' Office. That combination is extremely difficult to beat.

Everything that the usual channels think of such a Speaker would have heard of already. Those who think more often in committee than in European terms or in the rather robust way in which our Parliament behaves will find themselves dealing with a lady who understands only too well that the protection of the rights of the United Kingdom—and this Parliament is a Parliament of the United Kingdom—resides here in a Parliament that has had time enough to make excuses, to learn new ways, and to develop slowly over the centuries.

Only one group have found it very difficult to be fully represented here in the numbers in which they should be represented. That group is, of course, women. It is time that we had in the Chair someone for whom we shall vote not just because she is a woman, but because she is a woman parliamentarian whose intelligence and ability have proved themselves time and again in the protection of all Members of Parliament of all parties.

The House of Commons is at its most endangered when those on either Front Bench seek unduly to influence the Speaker. That is not unknown. From time to time those on the Opposition Benches have wanted to persuade a Speaker of the importance of particular aspects of the way in which debates are handled. It is therefore essential that we elect a woman who comes from one of the tribes of the United Kingdom that is well known for its ability to speak its mind plainly and with wit. I refer, of course, to the people of west Yorkshire.

Above all, I most strongly believe that this is an opportunity for the House of Commons to demonstrate its commitment to the interests of every one of our electors —not seeking only to consider the interests or rights of those who have come through the establishment, however strong may be their commitment to the interests of the House of Commons, but putting first and foremost the candidature of someone whom we regard with affection and respect, secure in the knowledge that it will be the House of Commons that she protects, that the House of Commons is her priority, and that it is for the House of Commons that she will speak with great force and great clarity.

I am delighted to second the nomination of Miss Betty Boothroyd.

3.37 pm

Sir Russell Johnston (Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber): I shall not detain the House for long—[HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear"]—and I ask new Members, who are in considerable confusion this afternoon, to observe how encouraging it always is to address the House and how warmly one's remarks are always received.

It is difficult for new Members in particular to make decisions regarding the relative competence and appropriateness of the candidates before us. There is one remarkable thing that may come to them afresh after their experience of the election: today, we are talking in favour of candidates and not against other candidates. I am in no doubt whatever about the qualities, honourableness, decency and fairness of Peter Brooke. I contend, however, that Miss Betty Boothroyd has three qualities which new Members in particular should consider most carefully. I am not trying to persuade those who are not new to this place; they know, and have made their judgments.

First, it is enormously important that the Speaker should be seen by every individual Member to be a fair person. I speak as a permanent Back Bencher for ever seeking to be a Front Bencher, and I can say quite simply that Betty Boothroyd is.

Secondly, control is sometimes necessary. The right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) said that, really, it was not all that difficult to control the House. It is easy enough for one of the difficult guys to say that, but, in reality, it is sometimes quite difficult to control the House. One need only look at those on the Bench beneath mine to realise that. I believe that Miss Betty Boothroyd has that essential sense of humour that is vital in controlling the House in a way that does not offend or anger people.

Thirdly, in the end, the Speaker requires to be decisive and to be able to make a clear decision and to stand by it. I know that Miss Betty Boothroyd would do that in a fair and good-humoured way, and I am happy to support her nomination.

3.39 pm

Mr. Robert Adley (Christchurch): May I briefly, Sir Edward, join in the many congratulations extended to you. I support the amendment so ably moved by my right hon. Friend the Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen) on behalf of the hon. Member for West Bromwich, West (Miss Boothroyd).

This is a strange place. We spend our time legislating and telling the rest of the world how to train and modernise, but we never train ourselves or new Members. We do not tell people about the job that they are supposed to be doing. It is not a disadvantage that the hon. Member for West Bromwich, West has had five years' experience as Deputy Speaker. Frankly, if we believe in training, we should regard that as a positive advantage. I take issue with the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) in only one respect: the fact that the hon. Member for West Bromwich, West is a woman is of no significance as far as I am concerned.

We face a difficult task today. There are three or four candidates from the Conservative Benches whom many of us will have known for 15 or 20 years or more. The Select Committee on Members' Interests has considered the question of lobbying. I found some of the activities of the past few weeks particularly unattractive with regard to the office of Speaker. It is one thing to lobby for someone who wants to be joint secretary of the Conservative Back-Bench social services committee when a vote is taken in secret; it is altogether different when we march through the Lobbies and people throughout the country are aware of our decisions.

I believe that the hon. Member for West Bromwich, West has served us well, and would serve us well in future. If she does not get the job, I hope that none of those who succeed her will bear me any ill will for what I have said. A non-partisan, cross-party consensus, if that can be achieved, would be best. On that basis, I have pleasure in supporting the nomination of the hon. Member for West Bromwich, West.

3.41 pm

Mr. Barry Porter (Wirral, South): I need only say that I have listened to the debate and I have no objection to those hon. Members who have been proposed. However, if it becomes necessary, I shall vote for the hon. Member for West Bromwich, West (Miss Boothroyd). I hope that it does not come to that. She has shown her credibility and experience, and I will have the greatest pleasure in supporting her.

Sir Edward Heath: Miss Betty Boothroyd has been proposed and seconded. I now invite her to submit herself to the House if she so wishes.

3.42 pm

Miss Betty Boothroyd (West Bromwich, West): May I congratulate you, Sir Edward, as I address you in this way for the very first time.

In accordance with ancient custom, I must now submit myself to the will of this House. However, this House has another custom on which I have checked. On an occasion such as this, one pays tribute to our former Speaker. In doing that, I am not merely obeying a custom. Speaker Weatherill was my teacher when I became a Deputy Speaker, but by the time he left office he had become my friend. He once said—and it is quite true—that a Speaker has no friends. In his case, he was speaking only part of the truth. It is true that a Speaker must have no favourites, but Speaker Weatherill had a legion of friends. Were this House to reach a certain decision today, it will be my hope to take my place among the honoured Speakers of the past whose number certainly includes Jack Weatherill. I might not achieve that, but that would be my aim.

Our former Speaker was asked on one occasion about his guiding rule when he was presiding. He quoted St. Bernard of Clairule:

"Notice everything. Correct a little. Cherish the brethren."

That is not a bad rule for a Speaker, and it is one that I would wish to follow. Although I shall certainly cherish the brethren when I am in the Chair, I can be relied upon to cherish the sisters as well.

That brings me to another factor which must be in the mind of the House today. Much has been written recently about the possibility of having a woman Speaker for the first time. Some right hon. and hon. Members might consider it desirable, others conceivably not, but this House must know that, although having a competent woman Speaker may be a good thing, having a bad woman

[Miss Betty Boothroyd]

Speaker would be disastrous. It would be a tragedy for this House, it would be bad for the country, and it would be bad for the cause of women everywhere.

I know, Sir Edward, that on occasions such as this the House can be somewhat sentimental, and there is nothing wrong with sentiment in some circumstances, but when it comes down to basics, the House is essentially hard-headed. So I do not need to urge this House today to make its decision only on the grounds of the qualities which have been revealed by my conduct in the Chair and by my membership of this House. I say to you, elect me for what I am and not for what I was born. That is crucial.

I have been a Member for nearly 20 years. For me, the Commons has never been just a career: it is my life. I have known it in all its moods—sometimes very dull, although even at its drowsiest it is always capable of erupting at the most unexpected moment. I have known it, unfortunately, docile, too, before the Executive. I have known it sometimes mutinous, and I have witnessed moments which are the very stuff that our history is made of. Now millions outside the House share the experiences that we all know here. The introduction of television into the Chamber has meant that whatever happens here is not only seen in this country but is broadcast to living rooms thousands of miles away. Although I certainly understand the emotions which are aroused in this Chamber—and I have every sympathy with the very strong and robust feelings which are so often revealed—people at home and abroad expect the highest possible standard of conduct from us.

I have been a Deputy Speaker, but always at heart I have been a Back Bencher, and, except for a period 16 years ago when I was in the Whips' Office, that has been my position. I have never sought, and I have never expected, to occupy one of the great offices of Government. It is true that I have seen Administrations grow enormously in size in the past 20 years. I have always been aware, though, that it is the Back Benches which provide the overwhelming majority of the House when all is said and done. Whoever takes the Chair will have one overriding responsibility—to safeguard the rights of all Members.

I wish to thank the right hon. Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen), who has been robust in my support since it became apparent that a new Speaker was needed. I also wish to thank my hon. Friend the Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody). As she said, we have known each other for many years in the House, on our party's national committee and in the European Parliament. To both of them I am grateful for the faith that they have placed in me. I must mention also the hon. Members who have voiced their support for me this afternoon. If that faith is extended by other right hon. and hon. Members, I shall of course endeavour to justify it.

I realise the weight of responsibility. It is something more massive, more demanding than anything that I have known before. I am comforted by the fact that this feeling cannot be unique, that almost every Speaker would have felt similarly in the past. Like them, I am conscious of my limitations. Like them, I shall endeavour to discharge my duty to protect minority rights without ignoring the fact that majorities have rights as well.

It will be a lonelier life than I have known before: no longer part of the camaraderie of the Palace of Westminster—though occasionally that is a little patchy; no longer sustained by my party alone—though that is even patchier. But I hope that I may be sustained by the good will which I shall attempt to earn of the Members of all parties.

I well remember a former Member of this House recalling at a previous election of this kind the qualities which another Speaker had outlined 400 years earlier. Speaker Yelverton thought that the office of Speaker demanded

"a voice great, a carriage majestical, a nature haughty and a purse plentiful."

How do I measure up to that? Not very well, I fear. I certainly do not possess a purse plentiful. I do not believe that I have been endowed with a haughty nature. It is true that in the past I may have been granted some physical agility; but my carriage is not all that majestical now.

So what is left? Perhaps only what Speaker Yelverton described as a "voice great". Hon. and right hon. Members with experience here know that I can use that voice strongly in fairness and justice when the occasion demands.

I now have to offer myself as the voice of the House—sensitive to the concerns of every Member, aware of the supreme duty of the Speaker to safeguard the rights of this House, abandoning all my previous commitments to party, and content to serve the House for as long as it may require.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 372, Noes 238.

Division No. 1] **[3.53 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nicholas
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashby, David
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Aspinwall, Jack
Austin-Walker, John
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Batiste, Spencer
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Roger
Betts, Clive
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Bowis, John
Boyce, Jimmy
Boyes, Roland
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Ms Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronald *(Blyth V)*
Cambell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, James
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Chisholm, Malcolm
Churchill, Mr
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ms Ann
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Dr John *(C'p'l'nd)*
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'shr)*
Dafis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*

Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Day, Stephen
Denham, John
Devlin, Tim
Dewar, Donald
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, William
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Foster, Derek *(B'p Auckland)*
Foster, Donald *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Gallie, Philip
Galloway, George
Gapes, Michael
Gardiner, Sir George
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gill, Christopher
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gorst, John
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harvey, Nick
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Henderson, Doug
Hendron, Dr Joe
Hepple, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate *(Vauxhall)*
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoff
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hume, John
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Ms Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Ms Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Ms Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Ms Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross, C & S)*
Kennedy, Ms Jane *(L'p'l Br'g'n)*
Khabra, Piara
Kilfedder, James
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Knapman, Roger
Leighton, Ron
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McCrea, Rev William
McFall, John
McGrady, Eddie
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Madel, David
Maginnis, Ken
Mahon, Alice
Mallon, Seamus
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marland, Paul
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyle Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Morris, Michael *(North'pton S)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nelson, Anthony
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Oiner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Oppenheim, Phillip
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Paisley, Rev Ian
Patchett, Terry
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew' E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Randall, Stuart
Rathbone, Tim
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Redwood, John
Reid, Dr John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Roche, Ms Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Smith, Llewellyn *(Blaenau G'nt)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Speed, Keith
Spellar, John
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Ms Rachel *(D'mline W)*
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stewart, Allan
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Sumberg, David
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(D'w'bury)*
Taylor, John D. *(Strangf'd)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Tipping, Paddy
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'xl'yh'ath)*
Tredinnick, David
Trimble, David
Turner, Dennis
Twinn, Dr Ian
Tyler, Paul
Vaz, Keith
Walden, George
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Ward, John
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow C)*
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Wicks, Malcolm H
Wiggin, Jerry
Wigley, Dafydd
Wilkinson, John
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan *(Carmarthen)*
Wilshire, David
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Wolfson, Mark
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Anthony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Giles Radice and
Mr. Robert Adley.

NOES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul

Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chaplin, Mrs Judith
Chapman, Sydney
Clappison, William
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcliffe)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Critchley, Julian
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Deva, Niranjan
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam
Fox, Sir Marcus
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gillan, Ms Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nicholas
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W H'f'rdshire)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Ms Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
McLoughlin, Patrick
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Neubert, Sir Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pickles, Eric
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Soames, Nicholas
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Streeter, Gary
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Willetts, David
Winterton, Mrs [illegible] *(Congleton)*
Wood, Timothy
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Sir Anthony Grant and
Mr. Peter Bottomley.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Main Question, as amended, put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That Miss Betty Boothroyd do take the Chair of this House as Speaker.

Whereupon SIR EDWARD HEATH *left the Chair, and* MISS BETTY BOOTHROYD *was taken out of her place and conducted to the Chair by* MR. JOHN BIFFEN *and* MRS. GWYNETH DUNWOODY.

Madam Speaker-Elect *(standing on the upper step):* Before I take the Chair, I wish to thank the House for the very great honour that it has bestowed on me. I pray that I shall justify its confidence, and I pledge that I shall do all in my power to preserve and cherish its traditions.

4.12 pm

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): Madam Speaker-Elect, I rise to offer you my congratulations and, as you have just seen in a most remarkable fashion, those of the whole House, on your election as our Speaker.

Many people will remark that you are the first hon. Lady to assume the awesome responsibilities of Speaker. I shall not dwell on that point, except to note that you have made history today. It seems to me, however, that the question of why you have made history is relevant. You have become our Speaker-Elect because the House trusts you. It believes that you enjoy in abundance the qualities necessary to protect and sustain the House, and to safeguard its rights. For those reasons and no other, you have become our Speaker, and I offer you my warmest congratulations.

Will you also permit me to congratulate my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Sir E. Heath) on chairing our proceedings so skilfully, on becoming Father of the House, and on the signal honour of becoming Knight of the Garter? I hope that he will play many more distinguished roles as Father of the House and Knight of the Garter.

Today was historic for another reason. This was only the third contested election for the Speakership this

century and only the sixth since 1800. The fact that it was a contested election adds to your success and in no sense detracts from it. It will enhance your authority in the House and it reflects also the richness of experience available to us in choosing our Speaker. I pay tribute to those right hon. and hon. Members who were also prepared to place their wisdom and experience at the service of the House.

The election of Speaker has been a House of Commons occasion and those of us who were privileged to be present will not readily forget the occasion. Members from the longest serving to the most newly arrived have expressed their individual preferences. So they should, because you, Madam Speaker-Elect, have now become the guardian of the rights of the House and of each and every Member within it.

The holder of the office of Speaker needs a vast array of talents and virtues. She must know when to turn a blind eye and when not to do so. She needs a quick mind and a ready wit and must be unfailing in her impartiality. She will sometimes need the wisdom of Solomon and, if I am strictly honest, she will sometimes need the patience of Job. I suspect, Madam Speaker-Elect, that all your predecessors found their patience sorely tried from time to time, not least of course Sir Fletcher Norton, Speaker in the 1770s, who was apt to cry out during a tedious debate:

"I am tired! I am weary! I am heartily sick of all this!"

I suspect that on some days, Madam Speaker-Elect, you may know precisely how he must have felt.

When I heard the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) and my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) speak about the remarkable expectations of the new Speaker, I wondered whether any of the candidates would remain. Thankfully, they did.

I have no doubt that you, Madam Speaker-Elect, meet the necessary and demanding qualifications because we have seen you display them in your five years as a Deputy Speaker. In some respects your job will be different from the jobs of your distant predecessors. You no longer have to face the personal physical dangers that existed for them nor, I promise you, the rough treatment meted out to the Speaker of the rump Parliament by the then Member for Huntingdonshire.

But new perils and burdens have grown up. Day after day you will be heard and seen by millions of listeners and viewers. You must deal with the steady growth and complexity of parliamentary business. The halcyon days of Mr. Speaker Popham are long gone. In Francis Bacon's words:

"When Mr. Popham was Speaker in 1581, and the Lower House had sat long, and done, in effect nothing, coming one day to Queen Elizabeth, she said to him: 'Now, Mr. Speaker, what hath passed in the Lower House?' He answered: 'If it please your Majesty, seven weeks'."

I cannot promise that you will be able to give such an answer in the coming Session, Madam Speaker-Elect.

I warmly welcome you, Madam Speaker-Elect, to the Chair of the House. I have no doubt that your Speakership will be long and distinguished, underpinned by adherence to the principle so eloquently proclaimed by Mr. Speaker Onslow who stated:

"I have loved independency and pursued it. I have kept firm to my original principles and upon conscience have never deviated from them to serve any party course whatsoever."

The election for Speaker is over and the House has chosen you by vote and then by acclaim. As you embark on your historic role, you do so with our warm good wishes and sincere congratulations.

4.18 pm

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn): Madam Speaker-Elect, I share with the House delight at your election. If there was any form of reservation in any part of the House, surely it must have been removed entirely by the way in which you stood at the point of your election, a time when you could have been expected to be overwhelmed by a certain emotion, and gave instructions that the Mace should be put in its appropriate position. That is what my children would call very cool. I think that that coolness has stood you in good stead over many years and will be of great benefit to the House during what I hope will be a long period of office.

My pleasure comes in part, Madam Speaker-Elect, from the respect and affection in which you are held throughout the House. I say that on the basis of a personal friendship, which shall not cease despite the fact that our political relationship has obviously been severed within the past 10 minutes or so. Respect and affection for you are widely held and have been so well earned.

I celebrate your election also because of the fact that you are a woman. After six centuries and 154 previous Speakers, your elevation to the Chair could hardly be described as an overnight success for women's rights. I heed, however, the admonition in your brilliant speech, which was that you should be judged on what you are and not on what you were born. Without differing in any way from you, Madam Speaker-Elect, I regard your election by an overwhelming majority to the Chair of this honourable House to be a step forward for the majority of the people of the United Kingdom who, after all, share your gender.

Whatever the basis upon which you were chosen by that large majority, Madam Speaker-Elect, it is clear that all Parliaments will want the qualities which you possess in abundance: good humour, determination, patience and endless stamina. You come to the Chair with special assets. Your previous careers have in more ways than one equipped you with balance and poise, as I am sure Baroness Castle would be the first to testify. Anyone who was a secretary of hers had to have a certain steely gracefulness. Let us put it no higher than that. You have a clear-headedness and precision which are widely recognised in the House. I saw those qualities manifested frequently in the testing environment of the national executive committee of the Labour party some years ago.

Most of all, Madam Speaker-Elect, you have full possession of the powers that are necessary for the Speakership of the House. They are not, of course, powers that are to be found in any formal rules or standing orders. They are powers of instinct, judgment, wit and fairness that form the knowledge that you have of the nature of human beings and particularly from the understanding that you have of the psychology and, dare I say it, neurology of the subspecies of homo sapiens to which we all belong in the House—political animals. It requires a special skill and experience to have a full awareness and knowledge of this subspecies and I am sure that the House has done itself a considerable favour in electing an expert to the Chair.

[Mr. Neil Kinnock]

First, Madam Speaker-Elect, you have the power to distinguish between genuine passion and mere posturing, between authentic outrage and synthetic anger. Secondly, you have the power to recognise when opinions have great significance even though they are held by a small minority, and sometimes a minority of only one. Thirdly, you have the power to maintain the decorum that is appropriate to this democratic House without wanting docility, which —I share your view—should be impossible. Most important of all, you have the power of discernment that permits you to understand the difference between rumbustious behaviour and riotous conduct.

We know, Madam Speaker-Elect, that you have these gifts of sagaciousness, which you share with 650 other Members. Doubtless you will occasionally have the benefit of their advice, and from time to time you can expect one or two Members generously to offer their help with one of those points of order that we all know to be motivated entirely by a cherubic desire to be constructive. You know how to deal with those points of order, Madam Speaker-Elect; of that I have no doubt. I for one will simply put my trust in your qualities and your sense of responsibility rather than to depend upon the sporadic counsel of others. When it comes to guiding the House, I say, better the Speaker whom we have elected than the talkers who are self-appointed or, if I may be permitted one very last familiarity, Betty, the Speaker we know than the devils we know only too well.

I congratulate you, Madam Speaker-Elect, and wish you a long and fruitful time in the Chair. I say with the greatest warmth and sincerity, may all your points of order be little ones.

4.24 pm

Mr. Peter Brooke (City of London and Westminster, South): I cannot guarantee, Madam Speaker-Elect, that every speech that I make under your Speakership will be as brief as this one. However, I want to be among the first of the Back Benchers to congratulate you on your elevation to the Chair. It is very moving to take part in history. I congratulate you from the bottom of my heart. I am not a man given to disorder, but I shall do my best to obey your every instruction.

4.25 pm

Mr. James Molyneaux (Lagan Valley): May I first pay tribute, Madam Speaker-Elect, to the efficiency with which the Father of the House, the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Sir E. Heath), secured your election in a democratic way, which is not surprising, given his consistent attitude to the position of women in authority.

On behalf of my right hon. and hon. Friends on this Bench, may I congratulate you, Madam Speaker-Elect, most warmly. Over the years we have experienced your scrupulous fairness and your protection of minorities. As you have already pledged yourself to look after the interests of the United Kingdom, I know that you will bear in mind the fact that, although there are some of us who are minorities in this House, we have a different status in the various component parts of the United Kingdom that we were sent here to represent.

4.26 pm

Mr. Paddy Ashdown (Yeovil): On behalf of my right hon. and hon. Friends, I take great pleasure in welcoming your election to the Chair, Madam Speaker-Elect. The Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition commented on this being an historic day. Of course it is, in all sorts of ways. My colleagues and I—and, I suspect, quite a few others—will cherish in particular the fact that at least the first vote that we cast in this Parliament was a winning one, even if others may not be.

There are three other good reasons for us to be particularly pleased that that was a winning vote and that we have your skills and abilities in the Chair of the House. First, we know that those skills and abilities, which we have learnt to respect and admire over the last few years, will be carried forward in the service of the House.

Secondly, for reasons alluded to also by the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition, you were right, as were others, to say that this is not an occasion on which we should have voted for you or against you on the ground that you are a woman. We voted for you on the grounds of your skills, your abilities and your qualities. Nevertheless, it is a matter of considerable welcome and some rejoicing that we now have our first lady Speaker in the House of Commons.

Lastly, it is a matter of some pleasure to me and, I suspect, to many others that after an election which has put the same party back in government for the fourth time, on the basis of only 40 per cent. of the vote, the Speaker of the House, by the will of the House, should be drawn from the Opposition Benches. That is a good thing. If permitting that denotes a more pluralistic attitude by the Government, it is a doubly good thing. We on these Benches believe that the voice of dissenters and of minority parties in the House has not been sufficiently heard over the last number of years. It is our hope that you will, as your predecessors have before, act as a bulwark and safeguard to ensure that those voices are adequately heard. The skill and fairness that you have shown in the past give us good reason to hope that that will continue to be the case.

Another point bears mentioning and it was raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace). In this Parliament, special consideration must be given to the position of Scotland where the Government are a minority party, as is the case in Wales. The Liberal Democrats, and others as well, hope and believe that you, Madam Speaker-Elect, will ensure that the voices of those who represent those two nations of the United Kingdom are heard adequately and properly when the occasion arises.

You, Madam Speaker-Elect, will need all your skills, all your judgment and all your sense of fairness in the job that you now have. My party believes that those qualities will be deployed to the benefit and service of the House and of the nation. We wish you well in the task ahead of you.

4.30 pm

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): I congratulate you, Madam Speaker-Elect, on your election to this high office today. I convey to you the warmest congratulations of my hon. Friends.

It is well known to the House that I have run foul of many Speakers. I am in the unique and honoured position of having been excluded, with my whole party, from the

House. I am happy that you have been elected, Madam Speaker-Elect, because I believe that a woman has a tenderness that some males do not have.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux), who leads the Ulster Unionists in the House, does not have any womenfolk to go home to. I have four womenfolk to go home to. How could I have faced them if I had voted against you, Madam Speaker-Elect, this afternoon? I hope that you will keep that in mind and be indulgent to the voice of Ulster in the House.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): On a point of order, Madam Speaker-Elect.

Madam Speaker-Elect: Today would not be complete without a point of order.

Mr. Banks: It will be a short point of order. I know of two hon. Members who wanted to vote for you, Madam Speaker-Elect, but who did not do so—probably the only two. One was you, who did not vote on a matter of principle, and the other was myself. My reason was nothing to do with principles, because I have few of those. The reason was bad timing on my part. I had intended to vote for you. I hope that, when you read *Hansard*, you will not hold that against me.

Madam Speaker-Elect: That is the most bogus point of order I have heard this Session.

4.32 pm

Mr. John Hume (Foyle): I, as the leader of a minority party, join the leaders of the other parties in the House in expressing our warmest congratulations to you, Madam Speaker-Elect, on your election. I heard you say clearly —I agree with you—that you were elected because of who and what you are and not because of what you were born, but I believe that it is historically significant that this place, which has always taken pride in the title "the Mother of Parliaments", has at last after centuries put a woman in the Chair.

The occasion is also historic because it does not take too much thought to realise that you, Madam Speaker-Elect, will lead this Parliament out of the 20th century into the 21st century. Everyone will agree that we are delighted that we are being led out of this century, which has been one of the centuries of greatest suffering which the world has seen, into a century of hope by a lady such as you. I wish you well and look forward to working with you in this Parliament.

4.34 pm

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South): May I wish you, Madam Speaker-Elect, my warmest congratulations?

4.35 pm

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives): May I, too, offer you my congratulations, Madam Speaker-Elect? I hope that what I am about to say will not be taken in the wrong spirit. The outcome of this election has been a fine one, and I am sure that the whole House rejoices in it. You will recall, however, Madam Speaker-Elect, that, at the outset of our proceedings, I raised with the Father of the House, who was in the Chair, the manner in which candidates were being presented for election. I felt that the system was wrong and that it was rather bizarre that right hon. and hon. Members who had made it perfectly clear that they were willing to stand for the high office that you will now occupy were being denied the opportunity to do so.

All that I ask, Madam Speaker-Elect, is that, in the fullness of time, the system for electing the Speaker should be revised—in case there are other elections in years to come—so that anyone who wishes to stand for the office has the opportunity to do so in a way which would be regarded as normal in any other election.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Boswell.]*

MADAM SPEAKER-ELECT *thereupon put the Question, which being agreed to, the House adjourned accordingly until tomorrow, and* MADAM SPEAKER-ELECT *went away without the Mace before her.*

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-five minutes to Five o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 28 April 1992

The House being met at half-past Two o'clock, and MADAM SPEAKER-ELECT *having taken the Chair;*

Message to attend the Lords Commissioners;

The House went; and, having returned—

Election of Speaker

Madam Speaker: I have to report to the House that, in the House of Peers, Her Majesty, by Her Royal Commissioners, has been pleased to approve the choice made of myself for the Office of Speaker, and that I have, in your name and on your behalf, made claim by humble petition to Her Majesty to all your ancient and undoubted rights and privileges, particularly to freedom of speech in debate, freedom from arrest and freedom of access to Her Majesty whenever occasion may require, and that the most favourable construction may be placed upon all your proceedings. All these Her Majesty, by Her Commissioners, has been pleased to confirm in as ample a manner as they have ever been granted or confirmed by herself or by any of Her Royal Predecessors.

My first duty to the House is to report my respectful acknowledgments and my grateful thanks for the great honour you have conferred upon me in placing me in the Chair.

Members Sworn

Madam Speaker: I must now call upon the Members of the House, according to the usual custom, to take the Oath of Allegiance at the Table of the House, but first I must do so myself.

Thereupon MADAM SPEAKER *first, alone, standing upon the upper step of the Chair, took and subscribed the Oath.*

Madam Speaker: It may be for the convenience of the House if I indicate my intentions with regard to the taking of the Oath by right hon. and hon. Members. I propose to call, first, the Father of the House; then the Government Front Bench; then the Opposition Front Bench; then all Privy Councillors and former Ministers not included in those two groups, wherever they may be seated. Thereafter, I shall call 20 hon. Members from each side.

I intend to continue in the Chair until about half past 4. Then I shall suspend the sitting until half past 5. I shall return, of course, at half past 5, and again at 6 for the last time. I hope that this announcement of these arrangements will be of some assistance to hon. Members if they have something which they might wish to do in the meantime. A similar procedure will apply tomorrow and on Thursday. The House will again sit at half past 2 o'clock, and I have it in mind to finish not later than half past 5 tomorrow and half past 4 on Thursday. I understand that it will also be convenient to meet again for swearing in on Tuesday next, when I shall be in the Chair from 2.30 onwards.

I hope that that announcement enables all hon. Members to make their arrangements accordingly.

The following Members took and subscribed the Oath, or made and subscribed the Affirmation required by law:

Right honourable Sir Edward Richard George Heath, KG, MBE, Old Bexley and Sidcup.
Right honourable John Major, Huntingdon.
Right honourable Douglas Richard Hurd, CBE, Witney.
Right honourable Michael Ray Dibdin Heseltine, Henley.
Right honourable Antony Harold Newton, OBE, Braintree.
Right honourable Malcolm Leslie Rifkind, QC, Edinburgh, Pentlands.
Right honourable Kenneth Harry Clarke, QC, Rushcliffe.
Right honourable Gillian Patricia, Mrs. Shephard, South West Norfolk.
Right honourable Peter Bruce Lilley, St. Albans.
Right honourable Michael Denzil Xavier Portillo, Enfield, Southgate.
Right honourable Virginia Hilda Brunette Maxwell, Mrs. Bottomley, South West Surrey.
Right honourable Ian Bruce Lang, Galloway and Upper Nithsdale.
Right honourable William Arthur Waldegrave, Bristol, West.
Right honourable Sir Patrick Barnabas Burke Mayhew, QC, Tunbridge Wells.
Right honourable Richard Andrew Ryder, OBE, Mid Norfolk.
John Anderson Cunningham, esquire, Copeland.
Derek Foster, esquire, Bishop Auckland.
Right honourable Gerald Bernard Kaufman, Manchester, Gorton.

[Madam Speaker]

Right honourable John Smith, QC, Monklands, East.
Robert Finlayson Cook, esquire, Livingston.
David George Clark, esquire, South Shields.
Donald Campbell Dewar, esquire, Glasgow, Garscadden.

Mr. Joe Ashton (Bassetlaw): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. This is developing into something like a rugby scrum. Could you point out to hon. Members that you said that you would call 20 Members from each side of the House, one after another? That would prevent——

Madam Speaker: Order. Perhaps some hon. Members were not in the Chamber when I made my announcement. I said that, after the Father of the House, I would call the Government Front Bench, the Opposition Front Bench, Privy Councillors from both sides of the House and former Ministers. I shall then call Back Benchers from both sides of the House.

I hope that there will be no rush. I have given ample time for the taking of the Oath, so let us proceed in an orderly manner.

Josephine Richardson, Barking.
Ann Clwyd, Cynon Valley.
John Whitaker Straw, esquire, Blackburn.
Frand Gordon Dobson, esquire, Holborn and St. Pancras.
Right honourable Anthony Neil Wedgwood Benn, Chesterfield.
Stephen Barry Jones, esquire, Alyn and Deeside.
Margaret Mary, Mrs Beckett, Derby South.
Joseph Kevin McNamara, esquire, Kingston upon Hull North.
Bryan Charles Gould, esquire, Dagenham.
Right honourable John Morris, Q.C., Aberavon.
Right honourable Robert Edward Sheldon, Ashton under Lyne.
Right honourable Alan John Williams, Swansea West.

Madam Speaker: It would be enormously helpful if the Whips, who know the procedure today, would help with the crowd.

Joan Lestor, Eccles.
Right honourable Jeremy John Durham Ashdown, Yeovil.
Sir Hector Seymour Peter Monro, AE, Dumfries.
Robert James Atkins, esquire, South Ribble.
Peter Robert Cable Lloyd, esquire, Fareham.
Right honourable Douglas Martin Hogg, QC, Grantham.
Kenneth Melville Carlisle, esquire, Lincoln.
Jeremy James Hanley, esquire, Richmond and Barnes.
Brian Stanley Mawhinney, esquire, Peterborough.
Mark Alexander Lennox-Boyd, esquire, commonly called the honourable Mark Alexander Lennox-Boyd, Morecambe and Lunesdale.
Simon Robert Key, esquire, Salisbury.
Gwilym Haydn Jones, esquire, Cardiff, North.
Right honourable Archibald Gavin Hamilton, Epsom and Ewell.
John Michael Jack, esquire, Fylde.
Cyril Irvine Patnick, esquire, Sheffield, Hallam.
Timothy John Robert Kirkhope, esquire, Leeds, North-East.
Right honourable Terence Langley Higgins, Worthing.
David Michael Davis, esquire, Boothferry.
Right honourable Sir Rhodes Boyson, Brent, North.
Right honourable Michael James Hugh Alison, Selby.
Christopher John Fred Gill, esquire, RD, Ludlow.
Sir Derek Harold Spencer, QC, Brighton, Pavilion.
Right honourable Dame Angela Claire Rosemary Rumbold, DBE, Mitcham and Morden.
Geoffrey Kenneth Dickens, esquire, Littleborough and Saddleworth.
Robert Hughes, esquire, Aberdeen, North.
Joseph William Ashton, esquire, Bassetlaw.
Right honourable Alfred Morris, Manchester, Wythenshawe.
Edward Rowlands, esquire, Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney.
Thomas Pendry, esquire, Stalybridge and Hyde.
Margaret Anne, Mrs Ewing, Moray.
Right honourable James Henry Molyneaux, Lagan Valley.
Reverend Ian Richard Kyle Paisley, North Antrim.
Gavin Steel Strang, esquire, Edinburgh, East.
Right honourable Stanley Orme, Salford, East.
John Denis Fraser, esquire, Norwood.
Terence Henry Rooney, esquire, Bradford, North.
Ian Graham Davidson, esquire, Glasgow, Govan.
James Dolan Cunningham, esquire, Coventry, South East.
John McFall, esquire, Dumbarton.
Marion Audrey, Mrs. Roe, Broxbourne.
Dame Mary Elaine Kellett-Bowman, DBE, Lancaster.
Dame Peggy Edith Fenner, DBE, Medway.
Maria, Mrs. Fyfe, Glasgow, Maryhill.
Sir Peter Frank Hannibal Emery, Honiton.
Dame Joan Christabel Jill Knight, DBE, Birmingham, Edgbaston.
Jack Heywood Aspinwall, esquire, Wansdyke.
Sir Trevor Herbert Harry Skeet, North Bedfordshire.
Gregory Knight, esquire, Derby, North.
Andrew James MacKay, esquire, East Berkshire.
Michael Bruce Forsyth, esquire, Stirling.
James Alexander Douglas-Hamilton, esquire, commonly called Lord James Douglas-Hamilton, Edinburgh, West.
Timothy John Rogerson Wood, esquire, Stevenage.
Julian Michael Shersby, esquire, Uxbridge.
Eric Forth, esquire, Mid Worcestershire.
Patrick Allen McLoughlin, esquire, West Derbyshire.
David Philip Heathcoat-Amory, esquire, Wells.
Richard Anthony Nelson, esquire, Chichester.
Harry Greenway, esquire, Ealing, North.
Jane Ann, Mrs Winterton, Congleton.
Peter David Robinson, esquire, Belfast, East.
Antony Brian Baldry, esquire, Banbury.
Thomas Clarke, esquire, CBE, Monklands, West.
Edward Loyden, esquire, Liverpool, Garston.
Alice, Mrs Mahon, Halifax.
Alun Edward Michael, esquire, Cardiff South and Penarth.
Peter Gerald Hain, esquire, Neath.
George Foulkes, esquire, Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley.
James Francis Dunnachie, esquire, Glasgow, Pollok.
Roland Boyes, esquire, Houghton and Washington.
Paul Peter Murphy, esquire, Torfaen.
Walter Menzies Campbell, esquire, CBE, QC, Fife, North East.
John David Home Robertson, esquire, East Lothian.
William O'Brien, esquire, Normanton.
Brian David Henderson Wilson, esquire, Cunninghame, North.
Winston James Griffiths, esquire, Bridgend.
Peter Leslie Pike, esquire, Burnley.

Llewellyn Thomas Smith, esquire, Blaenau Gwent.
Jane Elizabeth, Mrs Kennedy, Liverpool, Broadgreen.
Rachel Anne Squire, Dunfermline, West.
Ernest Ross, esquire, Dundee, West.
Michael Walton Bates, esquire, Langbaurgh.
Keith John Charles Bradley, esquire, Manchester, Withington.
Elliot Anthony Morley, esquire, Glanford and Scunthorpe.
Stuart Jeffrey Randall, esquire, Kingston upon Hull, West.
Robert Nelson Wareing, esquire, Liverpool, West Derby.
Dennis Turner, esquire, Wolverhampton, South East.
Diane Julie Abbott, Hackney, North and Stoke Newington.
Charles Frederick Wardle, esquire, Bexhill and Battle.
Derek Leslie Conway, esquire, Shrewsbury and Atcham.
Robert Gurth Hughes, esquire, Harrow, West.
Michael Clark, esquire, Rochford.
David Glynn Ashby, esquire, Leicestershire, North West.
Sir Donald Thompson, Calder Valley.
Patrick Charles Martyn Nicholls, esquire, Teignbridge.
George Malcolm Thornton, esquire, Crosby.
David Anthony Harris, esquire, St. Ives.
James Callaghan, esquire, Heywood and Middleton.
Stanley James Allen Hill, esquire, Southampton, Test.
Peter Gerald Malone, esquire, Winchester.
Robert James Adley, esquire, Christchurch.
Royston John Hughes, esquire, Newport East.
Right honourable David Arthur Russell Howell, Guildford.
Colin Pickthall, esquire, West Lancashire.
David Marshall, esquire, Glasgow, Shettleston.
Michael Connarty, esquire, Falkirk, East.
Ronald Campbell, esquire, Blyth Valley.
James Robert Wallace, esquire, Orkney and Shetland.
Eric Douglas Harvey Hoyle, esquire, Warrington, North.
Jeffrey William Rooker, esquire, Birmingham, Perry Barr.
Kenneth Purchase, esquire, Wolverhampton, North East.
David Patrick Paul Alton, esquire, Liverpool, Mossley Hill.
Nigel Griffiths, esquire, Edinburgh, South.
George Edward Howarth, esquire, Knowsley, North.
Elizabeth Lynne, Rochdale.
Iain MacDonald Sproat, esquire, Harwich.
Timothy Robert Devlin, esquire, Stockton, South.
James Norwich Arbuthnot, esquire, Wanstead and Woodford.
Michael Andrew Foster Jude Kerr, esquire, commonly called Earl of Ancram and known as Michael Ancram, Devizes.
Mark Noel Foster Robinson, esquire, Somerton and Frome.
Steven John Norris, esquire, Epping Forest.
Sir Robert Anthony Bevis Durant, Reading, West.
Richard Francis, Earl of Kilmorey, known as Richard Francis Needham, esquire, North Wiltshire.
Sir George Arthur Gardiner, Reigate.
Edwina, Mrs. Currie, South Derbyshire.
Richard Patrick Tracey, esquire, Surbiton.
Kenneth Roy Thomason, esquire, Bromsgrove.
Norman Hogg, esquire, Cumbernauld and Kilsyth.
Malcolm George Richardson Chisholm, esquire, Edinburgh, Leith.
Thomas McAvoy, esquire, Glasgow, Rutherglen.
John Valentine Butterfill, esquire, Bournemouth, West.
David Gordon Clelland, esquire, Tyne Bridge.
Robin Clifford Squire, esquire, Hornchurch.
Gerald Neil Steinberg, esquire, City of Durham.
Herbert Keith Speed, esquire, RD, Ashford.
Henry Baird McLeish, esquire, Fife, Central.
John Marek, esquire, Wrexham.
Kenneth Eastham, esquire, Manchester, Blackley.
John Matthew Patrick Hutton, esquire, Barrow and Furness.
David Julian Winnick, esquire, Walsall, North.
Alan Simpson, esquire, Nottingham, South.
Piara Singh Khabra, esquire, Ealing, Southall.
Donald Michael Ellison Foster, esquire, Bath.
John Thompson, esquire, Wansbeck.
Joan Mary, Mrs. Ruddock, Lewisham, Deptford.
John Rhodes Horam, esquire, Orpington.
Robert Brannock Jones, esquire, West Hertfordshire.
Andrew Stuart Mackinlay, esquire, Thurrock.
Ian Cameron Bruce, esquire, South Dorset.
Clifford Forsythe, esquire, South Antrim.
Sir Gordon Hannam, Exeter.
Ralph Frederic Howell, esquire, North Norfolk.
John Crocket Bowis, esquire, Battersea.
James Alexander Kilfedder, esquire, North Down.
Peter James Bottomley, esquire, Eltham.
John Leslie Marshall, esquire, Hendon South.
William Connoll Walker, esquire, North Tayside.
Roy Beggs, esquire, East Antrim.
Rupert William Simon Allason, esquire, Torbay.
Michael Nicholson Lord, esquire, Central Suffolk.
Neville Guthrie Trotter, esquire, Tynemouth.
Eric Lionel Clarke, esquire, Midlothian.
Estelle Morris, Birmingham, Yardley.
John Allan Stewart, esquire, Eastwood.
Andrew Peter Miller, esquire, Ellesmere Port and Neston.
Richard Haines Burden, esquire, Birmingham, Northfield.
Alan Wynne Williams, esquire, Carmarthen.
Nigel David Jones, esquire, Cheltenham.
Dr. Lewis George Moonie, Kirkcaldy.
Helen Margaret, Mrs. Jackson, Sheffield, Hillsborough.
Llinos, Mrs. Golding, Newcastle-under-Lyme.
Alistair Maclean Darling, esquire, Edinburgh, Central.
George William Stevenson, esquire, Stoke-on-Trent, South.
Geoffrey Lofthouse, esquire, Pontefract and Castleford.
Dr. Norman Anthony Godman, Greenock and Port Glasgow.
Andrew Francis Bennett, esquire, Denton and Reddish.
Barry John Anthony Field, esquire, Isle of Wight.
Edward Henry Garnier, esquire, Harborough.
Matthew Hadrian Marshall Carrington, esquire, Fulham.
Reverend William Martin Smyth, Belfast, South.
Michael Keith Beale Colvin, esquire, Romsey and Waterside.
Alan Gordon Barraclough Haselhurst, esquire, Saffron Walden.
James Edward Thornton Paice, esquire, South East Cambridgeshire.
Walter Edward Sweeney, esquire, Vale of Glamorgan.
Right honourable Nicholas Paul Scott, MBE, Chelsea.
George Alexander Bryson Kynoch, esquire, Kincardine and Deeside.
Sir David Bower Mitchell, North West Hampshire.
Dr. Liam Fox, Woodspring.
William David Madel, esquire, South West Bedfordshire.
Sir John Marcus Fox, Shipley.
Vernon Edward Hartley Booth, esquire, Finchley.

[Madam Speaker]

John McAllion, esquire, Dundee, East.
Geoffrey William Hoon, esquire, Ashfield.
Richard George Caborn, esquire, Sheffield Central.
Derek Anthony Enright, esquire, Hemsworth.
William John Olner, esquire, Nuneaton.
John Alston Maxton, esquire, Glasgow, Cathcart.
Donald Anderson, esquire, Swansea, East.
Jonathan Owen Jones, esquire, Cardiff Central.
John Dominic Battle, esquire, Leeds West.
Joseph Alan Meale, esquire, Mansfield.
Katherine, Mrs. Adams, Paisley North.
Eric Evelyn Illsley, esquire, Barnsley Central.
Michael Clapham, esquire, Barnsley West and Penistone.
Michael O'Brien, esquire, North Warwickshire.
Martin Redmond, esquire, Don Valley.
Andrew Welsh, esquire, Angus East.
William Etherington, esquire, Sunderland North.
Alexander Elliott Anderson Salmond, esquire, Banff and Buchan.
Nicholas John Hawkins, esquire, Blackpool South.
Angela Ann, Mrs. Knight, Erewash.
Sir John Daniel Wheeler, Westminster North.
David Roy Lidington, esquire, Aylesbury.
James Douglas Cran, esquire, Beverley.
Ian David Twinn, esquire, Edmonton.
Philip Warren Hawksley, esquire, Halesowen and Stourbridge.
John Mark Taylor, esquire, Solihull.
Nicholas Raymond Winterton, esquire, Macclesfield.
Oliver Heald, esquire, North Hertfordshire.
Geoffrey Robert Clifton-Brown, esquire, Cirencester and Tewkesbury.
Jacqueline Anne Harkness, Mrs Lait, Hastings and Rye.
Roger Kenneth Evans, esquire, Monmouth.
Roger Stott, esquire, CBE, Wigan.
Alan James Beith, esquire, Berwick-upon-Tweed.
Austin Vernon Mitchell, esquire, Great Grimsby.
Right honourable John Haggitt Charles Patten, Oxford West and Abingdon.
Alan Milburn, esquire, Darlington.
Alistair James Hendrie Burt, esquire, Bury North.
Adam Paterson Ingram, esquire, East Kilbride.
Eric Anthony Martlew, esquire, Carlisle.
Charles Peter Kennedy, esquire, Ross, Cromarty and Skye.
David George Hanson, esquire, Delyn.
Bruce Joseph Grocott, esquire, The Wrekin.
Stuart Bell, esquire, Middlesbrough.
Paul Yaw Boateng, esquire, Brent South.
Harold Barnes, esquire, North East Derbyshire.
Hugh Bayley, esquire, York.
James Boyce, esquire, Rotherham.
Hugh Patrick Thompson, esquire, Norwich North.
Stephen Richard Day, esquire, Cheadle.
Graham Edward Galloway Riddick, esquire, Colne Valley.
David Leonard Congdon, esquire, Croydon, North East.
Michael St. John Trend, esquire, Windsor and Maidenhead.
Piers Rolf Garfield Merchant, esquire, Beckenham.
Sebastian Newbold Coe, esquire, Falmouth and Camborne.
Terence Patrick Dicks, esquire, Hayes and Harlington.
John Robert Greenway, esquire, Ryedale.
Gary Nicholas Streeter, esquire, Plymouth, Sutton.
David Laidlaw Knox, esquire, Staffordshire Moorlands.
Peter James Luff, esquire, Worcester.
Olga Helen Maitland, commonly called Lady Olga Maitland, Sutton and Cheam.
Michael Louis David Fabricant, esquire, Mid Staffordshire.
James Randall Couchman, esquire, Gillingham.
John Graham Blackburn, esquire, Dudley West.
David John Nicholson, esquire, Taunton.
Nicholas Richard Ainger, esquire, Pembroke.
Peter Kilfoyle, esquire, Liverpool, Walton.
Clive James Charles Betts, esquire, Sheffield, Attercliffe.
Gerald Edward Bermingham, esquire, St. Helens South.
Thomas Graham, esquire, Renfrew West and Inverclyde.
Elfyn Llwyd, esquire, Meirionnydd Nant Conwy.
Ieuan Wyn Jones, esquire, Ynys Môn.
Ronald Davies, esquire, Caerphilly.
David Wright Young, esquire, Bolton, South East.
Simon Patrick Tipping, esquire, Sherwood.
Michael John Martin, esquire, Glasgow, Springburn.
Lawrence Francis Cunliffe, esquire, Leigh.
Lynne Mary Jones, Birmingham, Selly Oak.
Ann Coffey, Stockport.
Barbara Maureen, Mrs. Roche, Hornsey and Wood Green.
William Michie, esquire, Sheffield, Heeley.
John Heppell, esquire, Nottingham, East.
John Eric Austin-Walker, esquire, Woolwich.
Peter Hardy, esquire, Wentworth.
William Ross, esquire, East Londonderry.
Nicholas Brian Baker, esquire, North Dorset.
Charles Hendry, esquire, High Peak.
Matthew Richard William Banks, esquire, Southport.
Roger James Gale, esquire, North Thanet.
Sir Nicholas Cosmo Bonsor, baronet, Upminster.
Reverend Robert Thomas William McCrea, Mid-Ulster.
Sir Edward Macmillan Taylor, Southend, East.
Winston Spencer Churchill, esquire, Davyhulme.
Edward Julian Egerton Leigh, esquire, Gainsborough and Horncastle.
Raymond William Whitney, esquire, OBE, Wycombe.

Madam Speaker: Order. I have been very generous with time. I did say that I would leave the Chair at 4.30 pm. I wanted to accommodate hon. Members by being in the Chair to allow them to take the Oath. However, I fear that the numbers of hon. Members wishing to do so is growing. I must suspend at 4.45 pm, and I shall leave the Chair at precisely that time. Hon. Members can now make their own dispensations.

Robert Kenneth Litherland, esquire, Manchester, Central.
Tony Banks, esquire, Newham, North West.
James Marshall, esquire, Leicester, South
Archibald Johnstone Kirkwood, esquire, Roxburgh and Berwickshire.
David Charles Jamieson, esquire, Plymouth, Devonport.
Peter Charles Snape, esquire, West Bromwich, East
Sir David Russell Johnston, Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber.
Kim Scott Howells, esquire, Pontypridd.
Graham William Allen, esquire, Nottingham, North.
Michael Stephen, esquire, Shoreham.
Christopher Robert Smith, esquire, Islington, South and Finsbury.

David Lawrence Shaw, esquire, Dover.
Jacques Arnold Arnold, esquire, Gravesham.
Kevin John Barron, esquire, Rother Valley.
Ivan John Lawrence, esquire, QC, Burton.
Robert Adrian Hicks, esquire, South East Cornwall.
George Barrington Porter, esquire, Wirral, South.
David Lincoln Lightbown, esquire, South East Staffordshire.
Peter Benjamin Mandelson, esquire, Hartlepool.
David Martin Hinchliffe, esquire, Wakefield.
Sydney Brookes Chapman, esquire, Chipping Barnet.
David Blunkett, esquire, Sheffield, Brightside.
Right honourable Peter Leonard Brooke, CH, The City of London and Westminster, South.
Robert William Ainsworth, esquire, Coventry, North East.
Paul Marland, esquire, West Gloucestershire.
Barry John Sheerman, esquire, Huddersfield.
Simon Christopher Coombs, esquire, Swindon.
Frank Field, esquire, Birkenhead.
Alan James Carter Duncan, esquire, Rutland and Melton.
Anthony Worthington, esquire, Clydebank and Milngavie.
Simon Hugh McGuigan Burns, esquire, Chelmsford.
Anthony Joseph Lloyd, esquire, Stretford.
Michael Reginald Harry Carttiss, esquire, Great Yarmouth.
Robin Corbett, esquire, Birmingham, Erdington.
Dame Janet Evelyn Fookes, DBE, Plymouth, Drake.
James Patrick Dowd, esquire, Lewisham, West.
David John Pattison Martin, esquire, Portsmouth, South.
James Charles Cann, esquire, Ipswich.
Peter Landreth Atkinson, esquire, Hexham.
Trevor Keith Hill, esquire, Streatham.
Sir Alexander Paul Beresford, Croydon, Central.
Dafydd Wigley, esquire, Caernarfon.
John Michael Gorst, esquire, Hendon, North.
Greg James Pope, esquire, Hyndburn.
Sir Peter Maudslay Hordern, Horsham.
Mike Thomas Hall, esquire, Warrington, South.
David Wilshire, esquire, Spelthorne.
Martin John O'Neill, esquire, Clackmannan.
John Alan Redwood, esquire, Wokingham.
Janet, Mrs. Anderson, Rossendale and Darwen.
Jonathan Peter Evans, esquire, Brecon and Radnor.
Paul Archer Tyler, esquire, CBE, North Cornwall.
David John Porter, esquire, Waveney.
Nick Harvey, esquire, North Devon.
George Iain Duncan-Smith, esquire, Chingford.
Glenda May Jackson, Hampstead and Highgate.
Andrew Raikes Hargreaves, esquire, Birmingham, Hall Green.
Joyce Gwendolen Quin, Gateshead, East.
Iain Campbell Mills, esquire, Meriden.
Greville Ewan Janner, esquire, QC, commonly called the honourable Greville Ewan Janner, QC, Leicester, West.
John Rankin Rathbone, esquire, Lewes.
James Mackay Cousins, esquire, Newcastle upon Tyne, Central
Malcolm Douglas Moss, esquire, North East Cambridgeshire.
James Hood, esquire, Clydesdale.
Cyril David Townsend, esquire, Bexleyheath.
Malcolm Hunt Wicks, esquire, Croydon, North West.
Right honourable Kenneth Wilfred Baker, CH, Mole Valley.
Dawn Primarolo, Bristol, South.
John Ernest Townend, esquire, Bridlington.
Jean Ann Corston, Bristol, East.
Richard John Grenville Spring, esquire, Bury St. Edmunds.
Bryan Davies, esquire, Oldham Central and Royton.
Thomas Geoffrey Sackville, esquire, commonly called the honourable Thomas Geoffrey Sackville, Bolton, West.
John Laurence Garrett, esquire, Norwich, South.
Raymond Scott Robertson, esquire, Aberdeen, South.
Gordon McMaster, esquire, Paisley, South.
Right honourable Sir Ieuan Wyn Pritchard Roberts, Conwy.
Simon Henry Ward Hughes, esquire, Southwark and Bermondsey.
Philip Roy Gallie, esquire, Ayr.
John Gunnell, esquire, Morley and Leeds, South.
Andrew Robert Frederick Hunter, esquire, Basingstoke.
Michael John Gapes, esquire, Ilford, South.
John Arthur Watts, esquire, Slough.
Nigel Keith Anthony Standish Vaz, esquire, Leicester, East.
Nigel Martin Evans, esquire, Ribble Valley.
Francis Cook, esquire, Stockton, North.
Roderick Richards, esquire, Clwyd, North West.
Kevin Michael Hughes, esquire, Doncaster, North.
Angela Frances, Mrs. Browning, Tiverton.
Hilary Jane Armstrong, North West Durham.
John David Sykes, esquire, Scarborough.
Andrew David Smith, esquire, Oxford, East.
John Devereux Ward, esquire, CBE, Poole.
Brian Charles John Sedgemore, esquire, Hackney, South and Shoreditch.
Sir Dudley Gordon Smith, Warwick and Leamington.
Andrew Matthew William Faulds, esquire, Warley, East.
Right honourable William John Biffen, North Shropshire.
Gareth Lodwig Wardell, esquire, Gower.
Patrick Thomas Cormack, esquire, South Staffordshire.
Anne Campbell, Cambridge.
Emma Harriet Nicholson, Torridge and West Devon.
Anthony Wayland Wright, esquire, Cannock and Burntwood.
Bowen Wells, esquire, Hertford and Stortford.
Nigel John Spearing, esquire, Newham, South.
Graham Frank James Bright, esquire, Luton, South.
Christopher John Mullin, esquire, Sunderland, South.
Right honourable Timothy Alan Davan Sainsbury, Hove
Stephen John Byers, esquire, Wallsend.
David James Christian Faber, esquire, Westbury.
John Evans, esquire, St. Helens, North.
Harold Daniel Hope Elletson, esquire, Blackpool, North.
Terence Anthony Gordon Davis, esquire, Birmingham, Hodge Hill.
David Lindsay Willetts, esquire, Havant.
Paul Phillip Flynn, esquire, Newport, West.
Timothy Stephen Kenneth Yeo, esquire, South Suffolk.
Janet Ray, Mrs. Michie, Argyll and Bute.
Gyles Daubeney Brandreth, esquire, City of Chester.
John Scott Cummings, esquire, Easington.
Peter Michael Ainsworth, esquire, East Surrey.
Douglas John Henderson, esquire, Newcastle upon Tyne, North.
Right honourable Sir Geoffrey Edwin Pattie, Chertsey and Walton.
Winifred Ann, Mrs. Taylor, Dewsbury.
Ian Colin Taylor, esquire, MBE, Esher.

[Madam Speaker]

George Islay Macneill Robertson, esquire, Hamilton.
Peter Derek Fry, esquire, Wellingborough.
Dr. Jeremy William Bray, Motherwell, South.
Cheryl Elise Kendall, Mrs. Gillan, Chesham and Amersham.
James Wray, esquire, Glasgow, Provan.
Right honourable Sir Nicholas Walter Lyell, QC, Mid Bedfordshire.
Dr. John Reid, Motherwell, North.
Andrew John Bower Mitchell, esquire, Gedling.
Donald Dixon, esquire, Jarrow.
Alfred William Wiggin, esquire, TD, Weston-super-Mare.
Richard Lewis Page, esquire, South West Hertfordshire.
Richard Thain Alexander, esquire, Newark.
Densmore Ronald Dover, esquire, Chorley.
Toby Francis Henry Jessel, esquire, Twickenham.
David Arthur Stephen Tredinnick, esquire, Bosworth.
Alan Thomas Howarth, esquire, CBE, Stratford-on-Avon.
Right honourable Thomas Michael Jopling, Westmorland and Lonsdale.
John Quentin Davies, esquire, Stamford and Spalding.
Peter Giles Thurnham, esquire, Bolton, North East.
Peter John Viggers, esquire, Gosport.
Henry Campbell Bellingham, esquire, North West Norfolk.
Sir Patrick Michael Ernest David McNair-Wilson, New Forest.
Right honourable Sir Peter Norman Fowler, Sutton Coldfield.
Julian William Hendy Brazier, esquire, Canterbury.
Hugh John Maxwell Dykes, esquire, Harrow, East.
Right honourable Sir John Paul Stanley, Tonbridge and Malling.
Clare Short, Birmingham, Ladywood.
John Russell Carlisle, esquire, Luton, North.
Robert George Banks, esquire, Harrogate.
Marjorie Mowlam, Redcar.
Raymond Powell, esquire, Ogmore.
Dale Norman Campbell-Savours, esquire, Workington.
Ann Noreen Widdecombe, Maidstone.
Timothy Eric Boswell, esquire, Daventry.

Resolved, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Arbuthnot.]*

Adjourned accordingly at twenty minutes past Six o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 29 April 1992

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Madam Speaker: It may be for the convenience of the House if I indicate that, after calling all hon. Members in the Chamber to take the Oath or to affirm, I shall suspend the sitting until 5 o'clock. That will be the last occasion today. Tomorrow, I shall again be in the Chair from 2.30 pm, but I intend to finish not later than 4.30 pm.

Members Sworn

The following Members took and subscribed the Oath, or made and subscribed the Affirmation required by law:

Right honourable John Roddick Russell MacGregor, OBE, South Norfolk.
Right honourable Sir John Ambrose Cope, Northavon.
Right honourable Peter David Shore, Bethnal Green and Stepney.
Stephen James Dorrell, esquire, Loughborough.
Mostyn Neil Hamilton, esquire, Tatton.
John Patrick Butcher, esquire, Coventry, South West
Gwyneth Patricia, Mrs. Dunwoody, commonly called the honourable Mrs. Gwyneth Patricia Dunwoody, Crewe and Nantwich.
Dennis Andrew Canavan, esquire, Falkirk, West.
Robert John Dunn, esquire, Dartford.
George Robert Cryer, esquire, Bradford, South.
Sir John Giles Dunkerley Shaw, Pudsey.
Elizabeth Joan, Mrs. Peacock, Batley and Spen.
Terence Lewis, esquire, Worsley.
Brian Donohoe, esquire, Cunninghame, South.
Edward O'Hara, esquire, Knowsley, South.
Michael Charles Stern, esquire, Bristol, North West.
Right honourable David John Denzil Davies, Llanelli.
Right honourable Ronald Timothy Renton, Mid Sussex.
Dennis Edward Skinner, esquire, Bolsover.
Jeremy Bernard Corbyn, esquire, Islington North.
William David Trimble, esquire, Upper Bann.
Kenneth Robert Livingstone, esquire, Brent East.
William Rhys Powell, esquire, Corby.
George Galloway, esquire, Glasgow, Hillhead.
David Anthony Evennett, esquire, Erith and Crayford.
David Anthony Gerald Sumberg, esquire, Bury South.
John Yorke Denham, esquire, Southampton, Itchen.
Sir Robert Michael Marshall, Arundel.
Right honourable David John Mellor, Q.C., Putney.
Neil Francis Gerrard, esquire, Walthamstow.
Terry Patchett, esquire, Barnsley East.
Michael Hugh Meacher, esquire, Oldham West.
William James Clappison, esquire, Hertsmere.
Sir Peter Hannay Bailey Tapsell, East Lindsay.
Jonathan William Patrick Aitken, esquire, South Thanet.
Francis Nigel Forman, esquire, Carshalton and Wallington.
Douglas Charles French, esquire, Gloucester.
William Nigel Paul Cash, esquire, Stafford.
Bernard Christison Jenkin, esquire, Colchester North.
Jeremy Joseph James Hayes, esquire, Harlow.
Sybil Judith, Mrs. Chaplin, Newbury.
Richard Geoffrey James Ottaway, esquire, Croydon, South.
Eric Jack Pickles, esquire, Brentwood and Ongar.
Niranjan Joseph Aditya Deva, esquire, Brentford and Isleworth.
Sir Michael Jon Neubert, Romford.
Gordon Prentice, esquire, Pendle.
Bridget Theresa, Mrs. Prentice, Lewisham, East.
Audrey, Mrs. Wise, Preston.
Roger Edward Sims, esquire, Chislehurst.
Roger Maurice Knapman, esquire, Stroud.
Right honourable Thomas Jeremy King, CH, Bridgwater.
Dr. Charles Goodson-Wickes, Wimbledon.
Peter Harry Steve Griffiths, esquire, Portsmouth, North.
Nigel Christopher Waterson, esquire, Eastbourne.
David Anthony Andrew Amess, esquire, Basildon.
David Anthony Atkinson, esquire, Bournemouth, East.
Gary Peter Anthony Waller, esquire, Keighley.
Hywel Rhodri Morgan, esquire, Cardiff, West.
Right honourable Henry Paul Guinness Channon, Southend, West.
Michael Russell Brown, esquire, Brigg and Cleethorpes.
John Arbuthnot Ducane Wilkinson, esquire, Ruislip-Northwood.
Right honourable Alastair Robertson Goodlad, Eddisbury.
Harriet Ruth Harman, Peckham.
Tessa Jane Helen Douglas Jowell, Dulwich.
Bruce Thomas George, esquire, Walsall, South.
Angela Eagle, Wallasey.
John Flasby Lawrance Whittingdale, esquire, Colchester, South and Maldon.
Antony Rivers Marlow, esquire, Northampton, North.
David Alan Keen, esquire, Feltham and Heston.
Catherine Letitia Hoey, Vauxhall.
Peter Butler, esquire, North East Milton Keynes.
Sir George Samuel Knatchbull Young, baronet, Ealing, Acton.
Sir John Anthony Grant, South West Cambridgeshire.
James Theodore Lester, esquire, Broxstowe.
Sir Gerard Folliott Vaughan, Reading, East.
Sir William Fergus Montgomery, Altrincham and Sale.
John David McWilliam, esquire, Blaydon.
Michael Wolfgang Laurence Morris, esquire, Northampton, South.
Anthony Michael Vincent Coombs, esquire, Wyre Forest.
Samuel Laird Galbraith, esquire, Strathkelvin and Bearsden.
Bernard Alexander Montgomery Grant, esquire, Tottenham.
Right honourable Neil Gordon Kinnock, Islwyn.
Right honourable William Armand Thomas Tristan Garel-Jones, Watford.
Mark Fisher, esquire, North Durham.
Giles, Heneage Radice, esquire, North Durham.
Timothy John Smith, esquire, Beaconsfield.
Maxwell Francil Madden, esquire, Bradford, West.
Thomas Michael Cox, esquire, Tooting.
John Francis Spellar, esquire, Warley, West.
Peter Temple-Morris, esquire, Leominster.
Sir Richard Bernard Frank Stewart Body, Holland with Boston.
Martyn David Jones, esquire, Clywd, South West.
Roger Norman Freeman, esquire, Kettering.

[Madam Speaker]

John Leslie Prescott, esquire, Kingston upon Hull, East.
Right honourable David James Fletcher Hunt, MBE, Wirral, West.
Ian McCartney, esquire, Makerfield.
Arthur Nicholas Winston Soames, esquire, commonly called the honourable Arthur Nicholas Winston Soames, Crawley.
Nicholas Hugh Brown, esquire, Newcastle upon Tyne, East.
Nicholas William Budgen, esquire, Wolverhampton, South West.
Geoffrey Robinson, esquire, Coventry, North West.
Barry Charles Legg, esquire, Milton Keynes, South West.
Richard Charles Scrimgeour Shepherd, esquire, Aldridge-Brownhills.
William Michael Hardy Spicer, esquire, South Worcestershire.
Sir Nicholas Hardwick Fairbairn, QC, Perth and Kinross.
Clive Stafford Soley, esquire. Hammersmith.
Geoffrey Mark Wolfson, esquire, Sevenoaks.
Stephen David Wyatt Milligan, esquire, Eastleigh.
Roger Duncan Godsiff, esquire, Birmingham, Small Heath.
Right honourable Harold Walker, Doncaster, Central.
Matthew Owen John Taylor, esquire, Truro.
Right honourable Roy Sydney George Hattersley, Birmingham, Sparkbrook.
Phillip Anthony Charles Lawrence Oppenheim, esquire, Amber Valley.
Sir William Michael John Grylls, North West Surrey.
Vivian Walter Hough Bendall, esquire, Ilford, North.

ADJOURNMENT

Resolved, That this House do now adjourn till tomorrow at half-past Two o'clock.—*[Mr. Andrew MacKay.]*

Adjourned accordingly at half-past Five o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 30 April 1992

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Madam Speaker: It may be for the convenience of the House if I indicate that, after calling all hon. Members in the Chamber to take the Oath or to affirm, I shall suspend the sitting until 4 o'clock. That will be the last occasion today. On Tuesday next, I shall again be in the Chair from 2.30 pm.

Members Sworn

The following Members took and subscribed the Oath, or made and subscribed the Affirmation required by law:

Joan Lorraine Walley, Stoke-on-Trent, North.
Michael John Mates, esquire, East Hampshire.
Robert Victor Jackson, esquire, Wantage.
Right honourable Michael Howard, QC, Folkestone and Hythe.
David Maurice Curry, esquire, Skipton and Ripon.
Right honourable Cranley Gordon Douglas Onslow, Woking.
Sir John Leonard Hunt, Ravensbourne.
Andrew John Bernard Rowe, esquire, Mid Kent.
Roger Denis Moate, esquire, Faversham.
William Jefferson Hague, esquire, Richmond, Yorks.
Sir Thomas Richard Arnold, Hazel Grove.
Alexander Charles Carlile, esquire, QC, Montgomery.
Ronald Leighton, esquire, Newham, North East.
Seamus Mallon, esquire, Newry and Armagh.
Edward Kevin McGrady, esquire, South Down.
Alfred Cecil Walker, esquire, Belfast, North.
Right honourable Gordon James Oakes, Halton.
Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith, Wealden.
Keith Hampson, esquire, Leeds, North West.
George Edward Mudie, esquire, Leeds, East.
Roger Leslie Berry, esquire, Kingswood.
David John Maclean, esquire, Penrith and The Border.
Derek John Fatchett, esquire, Leeds, Central.
John Hume, esquire, Foyle.
Timothy John Crommelin Eggar, esquire, Enfield, North.
David John Evans, esquire, Welwyn Hatfield.
Wyvill Richard Nicolls Raynsford, esquire, Greenwich.
Andrew Robert George Robathan, esquire, Blaby.
Michael Goodall Watson, esquire, Glasgow, Central.
James Francis Pawsey, esquire, Rugby and Kenilworth.
Andrew Bowden, esquire, MBE, Brighton, Kemptown.
Mildred, Mrs. Gordon, Bow and Poplar.
Anthony Charles Lynton Blair, esquire, Sedgefield.
Joseph Edward Benton, esquire, Bootle.

ADJOURNMENT

Resolved, That this House do now adjourn till Tuesday 5 May at half-past Two o'clock.—*[Mr. Boswell.]*

Adjourned accordingly at half-past Four o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 5 May 1992

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Madam Speaker: It may be for the convenience of the House if I indicate that, after calling all hon. Members in the Chamber to take the Oath or to affirm, I shall suspend the sitting until 3.30 pm when again all hon. Members then in the Chamber will be called. That will be the last occasion today. As for tomorrow after the State Opening of Parliament, I shall be in the Chair at 2.15 pm and hope to complete the swearing in of hon. Members before the business of the House begins.

Members Sworn

The following Members took and subscribed the Oath, or made and subscribed the Affirmation required by law:

Right honourable Norman Stewart Hughson Lamont, Kingston upon Thames.

Allan Ralph Rogers, esquire, Rhondda.

Right honourable John Selwyn Gummer, Suffolk, Coastal.

Teresa Ellen, Mrs. Gorman, Billericay.

Dr. Robert Michael Spink, Castle Point.

Keith Douglas Rowland Mans, esquire, Wyre.

William McKelvey, esquire, Kilmarnock and Loudoun.

Calum Alasdair Macdonald, esquire, Western Isles.

Malcolm Gray Bruce, esquire, Gordon.

Right honourable john David Taylor, Strangford.

Cynog Glyndwr Dafis, esquire, Ceredigion and Pembroke, North.

Dr. Joseph Gerard Hendron, Belfast, West.

Right honourable John William Gilbert, Dudley, East.

Harry Michael Cohen, esquire, Leyton.

George Gordon Harvey Walden, esquire, CMG, Buckingham.

John Dudley Fishburn, esquire, Kensington.

James Gordon Brown, esquire, Dunfermline, East.

Sir James Wilton Spicer, Dorset, West.

ADJOURNMENT

Resolved, That this House do now adjourn till tomorrow at twenty-five minutes past Eleven o'clock.—*[Mr. Arbuthnot.]*

Adjourned accordingly at twenty minutes to Four o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 6 May 1992

The House met at twenty-five minutes past Eleven o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Message to attend Her Majesty:

The House went; and having returned:

The sitting was suspended until fifteen minutes past Two o'clock, and then resumed.

Members Sworn

The following Members took and subscribed the Oath, or made and subscribed the Affirmation required by Law:

Robert Adam Ross Maclennan, esquire, Caithness and Sutherland.

Tam Dalyell, esquire, Linlithgow.

Colin Ryley Shepherd, esquire, Hereford.

Anthony David Steen, esquire, South Hams.

Spencer Lee Batiste, esquire, Elmet.

2.17 pm

Sitting suspended.

2.30 pm

On resuming—

SESSIONAL ORDERS

ELECTIONS

Ordered,

That all Members who are returned for two or more places in any part of the United Kingdom to make their Election for which of the places they will serve, within one week after it shall appear that there is no question upon the Return for that place; and if anything shall come in question touching the Return or Election of any Member, he is to withdraw during the time the matter is in debate; and that all Members returned upon double Returns do withdraw till their Returns are determined.

Resolved,

That no Peer of the Realm, except a Peer of Ireland, hath any right to give his vote in the Election of any Member to serve in Parliament.

Resolved,

That if it shall appear that any person hath been elected or returned a Member of this House, or endeavoured so to be, by Bribery or any other corrupt practices, this House will proceed with the utmost severity against all such persons as shall have been wilfully concerned in such Bribery or other corrupt practices.

Witnesses

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That if shall appear that any person hath been tampering with any Witness, in respect of his evidence to be given to this House, or any Committee thereof, or directly or indirectly hath endeavoured to deter or hinder any person from appearing or giving evidence the same is declared to be a high crime and misdemeanour; and this House will proceed with the utmost severity against such offender.

That if it shall appear that any person hath given false evidence in any case before this House, or any Committee thereof, this House will proceed with the utmost severity against such offender.

2.32 pm

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Over many years, the House has passed this order, which relates to tampering with witnesses appearing before the House and Select Committees. However, when such tampering has occurred nothing has been done about it. It is not unknown for people to lose their jobs because they have given evidence to a Select Committee, yet when the matter has been raised in the House nothing has been done about it.

I wish briefly to draw your attention, Madam Speaker, to the report by the Select Committee on Trade and Industry on project Babylon—the sale of a supergun to Iraq. It is worth pointing out that the Committee was told by several witnesses that it would not be allowed to investigate, interrogate or question members of the secret services—MI5 and MI6.

The House will note that the order is not qualified. If the Government want to exclude members of the secret services from scrutiny by Committees of this House, they should table a motion to that effect. They have not done so. When the House passes this order, if a Select Committee wishes to interrogate members of the secret services who were up to their necks in the export of weaponry to Iraq, it will have the right to do so. No witness should be able to determine what a Select Committee can do. No Ministers should intimidate witnesses or say that they should not appear.

The Attorney-General, who is present today, is well aware of the problem. When Customs and Excise representatives were asked to give evidence to a Select Committee, they went first to the Attorney-General and then to the Leader of the House. They entered into a collusive arrangement not to give the full information. That was in breach of this order.

We must make it clear that, when Government Members nod their heads to this order, it will provide protection for people giving evidence—whether they are members of the Government, of the secret services, of special branch, or whatever. Such witnesses will have the protection of this order, and the Government had better take note of that.

Madam Speaker: The hon. Gentleman has made his point clear.

Question put and agreed to.

Metropolitan Police

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis do take care that during the Session of Parliament the passages through the streets leading to the House be kept free and open and that no obstruction be permitted to hinder the passage of Members to and from this House, and that no disorder be allowed in Westminster Hall, or in the passages leading to this House, during the Sitting of Parliament, and that there be no annoyance therein or thereabouts; and that the Serjeant at Arms attending this House do communicate this Order to the Commissioner aforesaid.

2.35 pm

Mr. Robert Adley (Christchurch): I submit to you, Madam Speaker—as I did to your predecessor—that it is impossible for this order to be enforced unless and until

[Mr. Robert Adley]

somebody, I hope with your guidance, prevents coaches from parking in and around Parliament square. Coach companies show an arrogant disregard of this Sessional Order. They ignore parking restrictions, flout security precautions, create congestion and generate pollution.

May I therefore yet again ask you, Madam Speaker, as I asked your predecessor, to have discussions with the Metropolitan police to determine whether this Sessional Order can be enforced? If it is not, it is not worth the paper on which it is written.

Madam Speaker: I attach great significance to this Sessional Order because it is of constitutional importance that there should be unimpeded access to this place. As the hon. Gentleman knows, the order relates to the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will give me the opportunity to ensure that his points are made known to the commissioner.

Question put and agreed to.

Votes and Proceedings

Ordered,

That the Votes and Proceedings of this House be printed, being first perused by Madam Speaker; and that she do appoint the printing thereof; and that no person but such as she shall appoint do presume to print the same.

Outlawries

Bill for the more effectual preventing Clandestine Outlawries; *read the First time; to be read a Second time.*

Journal

Ordered,

That the Journal of this House, from the end of the last Session to the end of the present Session, with an index thereto, be printed.

Ordered,

That the said Journal and Index be printed by the appointment and under the direction of Sir Clifford John Boulton, KCB, the Clerk of this House.

Ordered,

That the said Journal and Index be printed by such person as shall be licensed by Madam Speaker, and that no other person do presume to print the same.

Chairman and Deputy Chairmen of Ways and Means

Ordered,

That Mr. Michael Morris be Chairman of Ways and Means, and that Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse and Dame Janet Fookes be First and Second Deputy Chairmen of Ways and Means.—*[Mr. Newton.]*

Queen's Speech

Madam Speaker: I have to acquaint the House that this House has this day attended Her Majesty in the House of Peers, and that Her Majesty was pleased to make a Most Gracious Speech from the Throne to both Houses of Parliament, of which I have, for greater accuracy, obtained a copy.

I shall direct that the terms of the Gracious Speech be printed at the appropriate place in the Votes and Proceedings. Copies are available in the Vote Office.

The Gracious Speech was as follows:

My Lords and Members of the House of Commons

I look forward with great pleasure to receiving the State Visits of His Majesty the Sultan of Brunei and Her Majesty the Raja Isteri in November, and His Excellency the President of the Portuguese Republic and Senhora Soares in 1993.

I look forward to my forthcoming visit to the European Parliament and the Council of Europe at Strasbourg, and to my visits to Malta later this month, France and Canada in June and Germany in October.

My Government attach the highest importance to national security. They will continue to give full support to the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, and will work with our allies to adapt it to changing risks. They will aim to develop the Western European Union as a means of strengthening the European pillar of the Alliance and the defence component of the European Union. The United Kingdom's armed forces are being restructured to reflect these changes. Britain's minimum nuclear deterrent will be maintained.

My Government will work for a comprehensive and verifiable ban on chemical weapons, to prevent the proliferation of biological weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, and to encourage greater international responsibility in conventional arms transfers. They will help the Russian Federation in the task of dismantling surplus nuclear weapons.

My Government will work to strengthen the United Nations. They will require full Iraqi compliance with Security Council resolutions. They will work for a peaceful settlement in Yugoslavia. They will support moves to bring lasting peace to the middle east.

They will lay before Parliament the treaty of Maastricht and introduce a Bill to implement it.

My Government look forward to welcoming the European Council at our palace of Holyroodhouse in Edinburgh towards the end of the United Kingdom's Presidency of the Community in December. During the Presidency, my Government will attach particular priority to enlargement of the Community and completion of the single market. They will promote sound finance and budgetary discipline. With our Community partners they will continue to strive for a successful conclusion to the GATT trade negotiations, and to press for changes in the common agricultural policy.

My Government will encourage Community agreements with central and eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, and will support democratic reform there.

They will maintain the fight against terrorism in the United Kingdom and elsewhere.

They will energetically pursue policies to combat the trafficking and misuse of drugs.

My Government will play an active part in the Commonwealth. They will support efforts to build a democratic society in South Africa.

My Government will maintain a substantial aid programme to reduce poverty in developing countries. Its objectives will include promoting good government, sensible economic policies and respect for human rights. They will continue to press creditor countries for a further reduction in the official debt of the poorest countries.

The United Kingdom will work for a successful outcome to the United Nations conference on environment and development.

My Government will continue to administer Hong Kong justly and efficiently, in the interests of its people, and to co-operate with China on the basis of the Sino-British joint declaration to promote the political and economic development of the territory.

Members of the House of Commons

Estimates for the public service will be laid before you.

My Lords and Members of the House of Commons

My Government will pursue, within the framework of the exchange rate mechanism, firm financial policies designed to achieve price stability and maintain the conditions necessary for sustained growth. They will set policy in the medium term to ensure that the United Kingdom meets the convergence criteria set out in the Maastricht treaty. They will reduce the share of national income taken by the public sector and balance the budget over the medium term, reducing taxes when it is prudent to do so. They will promote market mechanisms and incentives and improve the working of the economy. To help business, legislation will be introduced to amend the non-domestic rate transitional arrangements.

A Bill will be introduced to improve further the law on industrial relations.

My Government will pursue vigorously their programme of privatisation. Legislation will be introduced to return British Coal to the private sector.

My Government are committed to increasing the role of the railways in meeting the country's transport needs. Legislation will be introduced to enable the private sector to operate rail services.

My Government will give priority to improving public services through the Citizen's Charter which will be at the centre of decision-making. Steps will be taken to apply charter principles throughout the public service.

My Government will continue to work to raise standards at all levels of education, to promote vocational training for young people and adults, and to improve teacher training. A Bill will be introduced to extend choice and diversity in education.

Action will be taken to combat crime and promote law and order.

A Bill will be presented to enable applications for asylum in the United Kingdom to be determined quickly and effectively.

Legislation will be presented to facilitate the work of the Parliamentary Boundary Commissions.

My Government will work to enhance the quality of life provided by our nation's cultural and sporting heritage. A Bill will be introduced to establish a national lottery to raise money for good causes.

My Government will continue to improve the quality of the national health service and community care and their responsiveness to patients' needs.

My Government will work both at home and abroad to protect the environment. They will ensure that the environment remains a key issue in all policy-making and will continue to publish annual reports.

Measures will be introduced to enhance the rights of local authority tenants in England and Wales and in Scotland, to establish an urban regeneration agency, and to enable leaseholders either to acquire the freehold or to extend the lease.

My Government will continue to improve and modernise the social security system with sustained emphasis on those groups with the greatest need. Legislation will be introduced to maintain an additional rebate for holders of personal pensions aged 30 or over.

Legislation will be introduced to promote improvements in agricultural marketing.

A Bill will be presented to promote the Welsh language.

For Scotland, legislation will be introduced to amend the laws relating to bankruptcy and early release of prisoners.

In Northern Ireland, my Government will continue their efforts to eliminate terrorism through resolute enforcement of the law, combined with progressive economic, social and political policies. They will promote the re-establishment of stable institutions of government, within a framework of positive relations with the Republic of Ireland.

Other measures will be laid before you.

My Lords and Members of the House of Commons

I pray that the blessing of Almighty God may rest upon your counsels.

Debate on the Address

[FIRST DAY]

Madam Speaker: Before I call the proposer and the seconder of the motion on the Loyal Address, it may be for the convenience of the House if I announce the proposed subjects for the various debates. Thursday 7 May, public expenditure; Friday 8 May, foreign affairs; Monday 11 May, privatisation; Tuesday 12 May, environment, local government and education; Wednesday 13 May, the economy.

2.40 pm

Mr. Kenneth Baker (Mole Valley): I beg to move,

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty as follows:

Most Gracious Sovereign,

We, Your Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled, beg leave to offer our humble thanks to Your Majesty for the Gracious Speech which Your Majesty has addressed to both Houses of Parliament.

Those hon. Members who were in the House back in 1979 may have a short and lingering memory of the Loyal Address on that occasion. It was the first speech that was sound broadcast in the House of Commons, which shows the extent of the changes that have occurred during the past 13 years. On that occasion, I had the great honour on behalf of my constituents in Mole Valley to second the motion on the Loyal Address, and now, some 13 years later, I have been given the extra honour of proposing the motion.

Much has happened in the past 13 years to us all and I must not make this a habit. I suspect that one of the reasons that I was invited to make this speech was that my speech some 13 years ago was followed by 13 years of uninterrupted Conservative rule. Before my hon. Friends are too triumphalist, they should remember that, after 18 months, Mrs. Thatcher's Government had become the most unpopular Government of recent history; she was a one-term Prime Minister of a one-term Government and, according to the opinion polls, which in those days we respected, we were 20 points behind. At that very nadir of the Government's fortunes, Mrs. Thatcher asked me to become a Minister and from then on things looked up, so my hon. Friend the Member for Gedling (Mr. Mitchell) should watch out.

I begin by congratulating—as I did 13 years ago—my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on his success in the general election. Some four weeks ago hon. Members on both sides of the House were candidates and, as we ran up to polling day, there were not many who believed that the eventual outcome would take place. *[Interruption.]* I was one who did, but there were many who did not. The political journalists and the political commentators who now look down upon our proceedings almost to a man and a woman had decided on the Sunday and Monday that we were finished. They wrote our political obituaries; they summoned the mourners; they invited the people to the wake; they even dug the grave. But my right hon. Friend refused to die, and a funeral without a corpse is a glum affair.

All new hon. Members will get to know many political journalists during the course of their political lives in the House, and they will discover that political journalists have no appetite for humble pie, even if it is served at their proprietors' cost in the best restaurants.

One of the things that new hon. Members will come to terms with is the political lobby. As you know, Madam Speaker, that takes place not in the Chamber but in the corridors and other parts of the House. The political lobby consists of Members of Parliament who gossip to other Members of Parliament, who gossip to journalists, who gossip to other journalists, who then go back to their editors, where they gossip again. Then they write their articles which are read by journalists and Members of Parliament as if they were written on tablets of stone. It is the most perfect system yet devised by man for the recycling of rubbish.

Before I come to the Queen's Speech, I have one thing to say to the Leader of the Opposition. We have both been in the House for approximately the same number of years. I was elected in 1968, he in 1970, and our paths have crossed several times, as Back Benchers and Front-Bench spokesmen and in other capacities. Since 1973, he has been the leader of the Labour party and he has conducted himself in that position with great courage and determination and has salvaged the fortunes of his party. I believe that history will be a great deal kinder and more generous to him than many current commentators. I do not know whether he will join us on the Back Benches, but I suspect that whatever role he has will be significant for the future of the Labour party.

The Opposition are going through the process of finding a new leader. I have been through that process on three occasions during my life in the House. It is never an easy process; it is always a bit difficult. But the process that the Labour party has adopted is not so much an election as an exercise in collective group therapy. The purpose of group therapy is to admit guilt and rectify the fault, and I wish the Opposition luck.

The leader of the Liberal Democrats must be a disappointed man at this moment. He hoped to have the balance of power, but he has finished one Member of Parliament down. *[Interruption.]* I am told that he is one up—

"small choice in rotten apples".

He does not have the balance of seats in the House, but no doubt he will argue that he has the balance of votes in the country. *[Interruption.]* The Liberal Democrats are at it already. They will no doubt be strongly advocating proportional representation during the lifetime of this Parliament. If the right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) tries to persuade the British people that that is a better system, I hope that he will explain how it will avoid the problems of Italy which, as a result of proportional representation, has no Prime Minister and no President; or the problems of Belgium, which has had no Government for 12 weeks; or the problems of the local assemblies in Germany where fascists have been elected; or the problems of the German Government where the new Foreign Secretary, as a result of being a member of a minority party, has acquired that office without standing for elective office. Therefore, if the leader of the Liberal party advocates proportional representation, he will find many on the Conservative Benches and, I suspect, some on the Opposition Benches strongly defending our present electoral system.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Baker: The hon. Gentleman will have plenty of time to make his points.

I welcome strongly in the Queen's Speech the Government's commitment to continue with the education reforms which I had the privilege to put on the statute book four years ago. The national curriculum, testing, delegated budgets, grant-maintained schools and the expansion of further and higher education must remain the Government's highest priority and be pursued with vigour.

Secondly, I welcome in the Queen's Speech the commitment to bring competition and private capital into British Rail and British Coal. Those Bills follow upon the privatisation of the utilities in the 1980s. I remember taking two Bills through the House to privatise British Telecom and, as a result, the utility had access to the private capital markets instead of depending on the taxpayer.

Thirdly, I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on putting into his first Queen's Speech the determination to put on the statute book as quickly as possible a Bill to establish a national lottery. I published the details of that a few days before the election, and I hope that my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for National Heritage, the new Minister in the new Department, will establish a national lottery as soon as possible, otherwise there will not be much fun for him. We cannot have the circuses without the bread.

Fourthly, I welcome the fact that the Government are to reintroduce the Asylum Bill to deal with one of the most pressing problems that affect western Europe.

Given the range of responsibilities involved, and the outline of the Queen's Speech, there is no doubt that we on the Back Benches will be very busy indeed. Thirteen years ago, I gave some advice to Conservative Back Benchers. I told them that, if they wanted to get on, they would have to find a foothold on that narrow strip of land that lies between rebellion and sycophancy. I must congratulate my right hon. Friends in the Cabinet who have pursued that advice so vigorously.

Let me give some more advice to new Members on both sides of the House. They are naturally proud to be joining the best debating chamber in the world—for this is the best debating chamber in the world—but they will find themselves having to attend many debates that are tedious and not well attended, and to continue to address the great empty green Benches. Then they will meet the parliamentary twins, humdrum and humbug. If they can endure humdrum, and occasionally engage in humbug, they will be the darlings of the Whips' Office and no post will be beyond their grasp. One of them may actually end up as Chief Whip—a post which, according to Sir Robert Peel, required all the qualities of a gentleman, but unfortunately no gentleman would ever accept it. Let me say to my right hon. Friend the present Chief Whip that I expect to be paired a little during this Parliament!

The most important Bill with which we shall deal before the summer recess is the European Bill on Maastricht. The situation in Europe has changed dramatically since my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister negotiated that treaty. At Maastricht, we were the underdog; we were the country that was being bullied. Now the position is entirely different. Since Maastricht, the situation in Europe has been transformed. Britain now has the stablest Government in Europe; it has a strong currency, and we are coming out of the recession. I hope that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister will be able to use those strengths and advantages to secure his vision for Europe —not a federal vision, but a vision of a Europe that draws its strength and vitality from the different nation states. I hope that this Parliament will not see an irreversible shift of power to any Brussels-dominated Government.

Let me say to my right hon. Friend that, when we come back to the House for the next Queen's Speech after the next general election, we shall not find that the powers of the House have been reduced, that its influence has been diminished, and that we are nothing more than a regional assembly. That is not the way forward for the House or for our country, and none of us was elected to bring it about.

2.53 pm

Mr. Andrew Mitchell (Gedling): It is a great honour for me to second the motion proposed so wittily, ably and brilliantly by my right hon. Friend the Member for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker). The honour belongs, however, not to me but to my constituents, who have so generously sent me back to this place to represent their views; and who, with such good sense, have been electing Conservative Members of Parliament for my constituency since the first world war—with one minor lapse of taste in 1945.

I am well aware that, over the past five years, my constituency of Gedling has not been as well known in this place as I should like it to be. I therefore intend it to become, over the next five years, as famous and as celebrated even—perhaps—as Basildon, although maybe not for quite the same reason.

As you will understand, Madam Speaker, I do not usually have the pleasure of being joined by so many of my colleagues on both sides when I address the House. Faced with this task today I took myself to the Smoking Room to seek the advice of a distinguished and senior member of my party. He said, "Don't worry, you will be fine. The motion is nearly always proposed by some genial old codger on the way out and seconded by an oily young man on the make."

I decided to take some further advice and I went to another distinguished member of my party—an ex-Minister. I asked him what I should do. He said, "You will be fine. You come from a political family and follow in immensely distinguished parental footsteps." I said, "Thank you for your advice—father."

I decided not to take any further advice because as I walked down the Library Corridor I met another immensely senior and distinguished grandee of our party. He put out his hand to me and welcomed me to the House of Commons. He said that if I needed any advice in my first few days he hoped that I would come to him. Such is the mark that I have made in the House during the past five years.

But it is at least a contrast to the occasion when Nigel Lawson came to speak in my constituency in 1987 when I was first seeking election to this place as a new boy. He told my astonished constituents that they should re-elect me because I had done such a good job in the House of Commons during the previous five years. I do not think that my constituents have believed a Cabinet Minister since.

My constituency of Gedling may be better known to some of my colleagues as Carlton which was previously represented by my predecessor, Sir Philip Holland, and before him by Sir Kenneth Pickthorn. It lies to the eastern

[Mr. Andrew Mitchell]

side of the boundaries of Nottingham city and takes in the predominantly urban areas of Carlton and Arnold. I am deeply proud to represent it in this place.

My constituency gets its name from the village of Gedling that traces its origins from Saxon times. It is reputed to have been settled by a Germanic tribe led by an extremely fierce and war-like lady of strong opinions and firm convictions. She ruled over the tribe for many years before being deposed and replaced by a man of milder countenance but of steely resolve. Legend has it that he ruled over the tribe for nearly twice as long as she did.

My constituents welcome the words in the Gracious Speech about the Government's commitment to beating crime and continuing the battle against drugs. However, they feel strongly that more can be done by Parliament, by Government, in schools, within the home and family as well as by the police. My constituents are particularly mindful that many reports, including those produced by the Audit Commission, have demonstrated clearly that police efficiency is mixed and varied across the country. I hope that we can continue to make important progress on crime and I welcome the commitment to doing so in the Queen's Speech.

It is now extremely important that we should have another look at reforming the procedures in the House. The Select Committee has produced an interesting report on the sittings of the House. I do not say that it is the answer and I do not agree with everything in it, but I hope that the nettle that has so often failed to be grasped by Government and Parliament will be dealt with on this occasion. I speak as the father of two young children and, previously, the child of a young father and I hope that this issue will now be addressed.

Finally, whatever the problems and strains in the world around us may be, I believe in the thread of national pride which has run through this United Kingdom. In all humility, I beg to suggest that many of my generation who sit on these Benches are passionate supporters of the United Kingdom. We believe that the people of England, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales are justifiably proud of the differences between them, yet are integral parts of a unified nation fashioned by history over almost 300 years.

If there are better ways of administering that union, and of providing good governance within it, let us seek them out. But in seconding the Loyal Address to Her Majesty I want to stress my emphatic belief that she should remain Queen of the United Kingdom.

I hope that our Government will not allow any event to take place which could weaken that objective, or replace the ties which bind us together with policies which could force us apart.

3.1 pm

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn): I begin with the traditional congratulations to the right hon. Member for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker) and the hon. Member for Gedling (Mr. Mitchell) for their excellent speeches moving and seconding the Loyal Address in reply to the Queen's Speech. Clearly, in making their choice this time, the Government Whips decided upon a mixture for that task. They decided upon a combination of exuberance and experience, of smooth with rough, of loyal Heathite with loyal Thatcherite—and all those qualities are conveniently gathered together in the one person of the right hon. Member for Mole Valley.

The right hon. Gentleman is truly a man of many parts. Consequently he has attracted rather more than the usual amount of comment from a variety of newspapers and people who give their views on our parliamentary scene. He has been variously called the Cheshire cat, the vicar of Bray, the "flexible friend", and the "great surfer of British politics". The right hon. Gentleman has absorbed all that —as praise.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): The big fat slug on "Spitting Image".

Mr. Kinnock: My hon. Friend reminds me of one of the most charming interpretations of the right hon. Gentleman. I was here when Martin Flannery—who, sadly, is no longer a Member of the House, but is enjoying a well-earned retirement—said that the right hon. Gentleman was the only man he knew who could strut sitting down.

That remark competes with the saw of Mr. John Cole —an acerbic witness of our parliamentary affairs—that if the right hon. Gentleman represented the future, Mr. Cole had seen the future, "and it smirks". That, too, the right hon. Gentleman took as praise.

The right hon. Gentleman has been described as being able to fall from grace without ever hitting the ground. Mr. Anthony Bevins, who has many friends in all parts of the House, wrote that he was

"adept at keeping one step ahead of his own debris."

Certainly, there is some evidence of that. The right hon. Gentleman moved from his position as Secretary of State for the Environment before the poll tax, of which he was a proud architect, caused turmoil behind him. He then went on to the Department of Education, where he made many changes, not the least of which was to introduce training days, known as "Baker days"—more colloquially and colourfully described in the teaching profession as "B-days". My information on that, as the right hon. Gentleman will imagine, is entirely respectable.

From education, the right hon. Gentleman was appointed chairman of the Conservative party, thus proving that the Tory party is one of the few organisations in which movement from education to propaganda is regarded as a promotion.

As his final ministerial resting place, the right hon. Gentleman became Home Secretary. That was within the recent memory of the House, so I will not prolong proceedings by going through the variety of escapades into which the right hon. Gentleman got in that position. To his credit, and despite that immensely busy ministerial career, during those years the right hon. Gentleman has also published four excellent anthologies of poetry. Indeed, his achievements do not stop at that. He has been known to turn a verse or two himself. I have had the good fortune to come across one of those verses. He himself sent it to a national newspaper and I have an example of it here which the House should hear. I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman will take a certain pride in authorship. I quote:

"There was a *Sun* reader called Ken
Who worked somewhere close to Big Ben.
When he wanted the news,
And some up to date views,
He gave the *Sun* ten out of ten."

I am pretty certain that, with talent like that, the right hon. Gentleman will be able to give some of his time to writing

a column for *The Sun*. I am also certain that another Ken, my hon. Friend the Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone), will gladly move over and permit the right hon. Gentleman to take his place as a columnist in *The Sun*.

The hon. Member for Gedling, who seconded the Loyal Address in a very accomplished speech, appears to share some of the attributes of his right hon. Friend the Member for Mole Valley, who proposed the Address. He speaks of himself as "very dry" on the economy and not so dry on social issues. In his own words, he is "more Amontillado than fino". As he is a wine importer, he should know.

If the hon. Gentleman is getting so much good advice and so many spontaneous approaches from other Members of Parliament, he should be careful in the next couple of months. He may be wandering the corridors one day and one of my hon. Friends may ask if he will vote for him in the shadow Cabinet elections. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman should check his availability over that period.

The hon. Gentleman frankly and publicly admits to ambition. Strange though it may seem, that is a rare admission from a Member of the House even though some of the greatest love affairs I have ever known have involved just one politician, unaccompanied. I have no one special in mind. I am certain that to admit to such ambition stands the hon. Gentleman in good stead. I am also sure that, in selecting him to perform the task that he performed so well today, the Whips were tipping him the wink as well as bringing some pride and some pleasure to his old dad, the hon. Member for Hampshire, North-West (Sir D. Mitchell). I congratulate the right hon. Member for Mole Valley and the hon. Member for Gedling on the way in which they moved the Loyal Address.

I naturally welcome several items in the Queen's Speech, among them the commitments on combating terrorism and drug trafficking, the commitments to undertake further work for the peaceful settlement in Yugoslavia—a tragedy that is staining our whole continent and causing awful pain to the people of the republics—and the pledges to support Community agreements with central and eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, and to continue to assist in dismantling nuclear weapons in the Russian Federation and, we hope, elsewhere should the transfer of those weapons not proceed as smoothly as we hope that it will. Those and other similar efforts will have support from the Opposition.

Clearly, it is right too for the Prime Minister to attend the United Nations conference on environment and development in Rio de Janeiro next month, but it is vital that he use that visit to promote effective international efforts to protect the environment, to foster sustainable development and to fight poverty. If countries such as Britain do not use the conference for those directly interrelated purposes, a unique opportunity to safeguard the planet will have been lost, and no responsible Government—let alone any responsible country—could afford or excuse that loss.

In the Queen's Speech, the Government pledge themselves to sustained growth, and there, too, there is room for agreement. As the Prime Minister said last week:

"We need a recovery that is steady and sustainable, not one that recreates the problems from which we are now emerging."

Nobody could—and, surely, nobody would—disagree with that. But, given that we know that the problems from which we are now—it is to be hoped—emerging, were created by the policies of this Government, we can fairly ask what changes they are now making to ensure that there is no recurrence of the conditions that brought the recession in the first place. What are they going to do differently? What new policies do they propose to pursue to ensure that this time—unlike the period following their first recession—recovery is steady, recovery is sustainable and recovery does not recreate the problems referred to by the Prime Minister?

From the evidence of this Queen's Speech, the answer to the question, "What is new in their approach to the economic issues?" is nothing. There are no changes that will bring sustained and sustainable recovery, because there are no policies that will bring sustained and sustainable improvement in productive performance. There is still—as there was last time, and the Government appear not to learn the lessons—a complete dependence on growth of consumption to lead us out of the recession. There are no proposals to help to stimulate the construction industries out of their worst recession for more than 40 years. There are no commitments to increased and more secure funding for the training and enterprise councils, and the cuts in training expenditure have not been reversed. There is no response to the repeated calls from the Confederation of British Industry and the Engineering Employers Federation for investment incentives for industry. There is nothing in the Queen's Speech that will reverse the reductions in Government support for commercially viable research and development in industry.

Where transport and energy industries—vital though they are—are mentioned in the Queen's Speech, it is only in references to privatisation. What help can that be in achieving steady and sustainable recovery? The privatisation of coal will bring a huge increase in import dependence and, in the coalfields, a huge increase in unemployment. Meanwhile, rail privatisation is being proposed in a country where the completion of the channel tunnel has been put back for want of private finance and the construction of the vital high-speed rail link to the channel tunnel has also been postponed for want of public finance. What help will privatisation be in solving those and many other problems in an underinvested, outdated and congested transport system?

Despite the fact that the Government have no policies to build the sound foundations of sustainable recovery, we heard the Prime Minister claim last week in his speech to the Institute of Directors that

"half the world is queuing up for a dose of British medicine."

Can the Prime Minister mean the medicine that has put our country at the bottom of the G7 leagues for manufacturing investment, economic growth and job creation for an unprecedented fourth year in succession? [HON. MEMBERS: "Not true."] The trouble is that it is true: it was true before the election, it is true now and, as long as the present Government are in power, that is where it will stick. What a way for our country to face the completion of the single market and more intense competition at the end of this year. When the Prime Minister spoke of the British medicine, did he mean the policy concoction which has pushed Britain down to 18th of the 24 leading economies in the world measured in terms of output per head of population? Are the other European Community countries really looking——

Mr. Ian Bruce (South Dorset): That's right—run Britain down.

Mr. Kinnock: The Government have run Britain down with their policies. I am trying to build Britain up. The people of Britain want Britain to be built up. They do not want us to be bottom of the league. They do not want us to slip down the international league. They want investment, development and sustainable recovery. They want policies that will bring that about.

Are the other countries of the European Community really looking for what the Prime Minister calls the British medicine when, of the 1 million people who last year lost their jobs in the 12 countries of the Community, 850,000 lived in Britain? Eighty-five per cent. of the increase in unemployment in the Community last year occurred in this country. I do not expect the Government to be exercised by those appalling unemployment figures. After all, the word "unemployment" does not appear in the Queen's Speech. That says a lot about the Government. Some 2·7 million of our fellow citizens are unemployed, but they are not mentioned in the Queen's Speech.

Unemployment and the fear of unemployment are hanging over the confidence of countless individuals, families and households, but the Prime Minister and the Government cannot even bring themselves to mention unemployment in the Queen's Speech. Why are they so coy about unemployment? After all, is this not supposed to be the medicine for which half the world—in the Prime Minister's words—is clamouring?

Apart from being a lethal medicine, unemployment is a very expensive medicine. Its price is not simply measured in terms of personal tragedies and family crises: its price is measured in the costs of unemployment, which are now a major cause of the increased budget deficit of £28 billion to which the Government have so far admitted. Both unemployment and the deficit are forecast to continue to rise.

In the Queen's Speech, the Government tell us that they will get rid of that deficit in the medium term. Perhaps when the Prime Minister speaks later he will tell us how he intends to do that. Perhaps he will tell us how he proposes to fulfil the pledge in the Queen's Speech to balance the budget in the medium term—in other words, in the next three or four years. Does he promise to do that with higher growth? If so, is he pledging now that he will achieve higher levels of sustained growth and lower balance of payments deficits than any ever achieved by this Government, even at the height of North sea oil output? Alternatively, does the Prime Minister intend to balance the budget over the medium term—over three or four years—with higher taxes? If so, which taxes does he intend to raise? Or will the Prime Minister fulfil his promise in the Queen's Speech to balance the budget in the medium term by cutting public expenditure programmes? If that is what he is going to do, he should tell us which programmes he intends to cut.

When the Government can say with such certainty that they will get rid of the budget deficit in the medium term, they must know how they are going to do that. We should be told the answers in this debate. The country should be told the answers now so that people know what they face in the years ahead as the Government, who through their policies have generated a massive rise in the public sector deficit, go about the business of fulfilling their promise—if that is what they intend to do—of balancing that budget.

Perhaps the answers to those questions are not to be found in growth, tax increases or spending cuts. Perhaps they are to be found in what the Queen's Speech describes as the national lottery

"to raise money for good causes."

That would not be a very surprising development from this Government.

Opting-out is being extended in health and education. The dependence on fund-raising efforts to buy basic necessities for hospitals and schools is becoming increasingly intense. There is no strategy for combating widening poverty in our country. The Government refuse to invest extra in housing. Unemployment continues to rise. All those policies—every single one of those policies—are making opportunity and care, and for many people even life itself, more of a gamble.

The Government are making the principle of the lottery into a ruling system for society and for the social institutions which serve this society. They are fragmenting the schooling system by opt-outs and dividing it by selection, so that the quality of education becomes more dependent on the fortune of parentage or background or neighbourhood. They are fracturing the national health service into trusts and making it a creature of contracts, so that the quality of health care becomes more a matter of chance for more people.

Mr. David Shaw (Dover): That is out of date.

Mr. Kinnock: It is as up to date as the waiting lists. It is as up to date as those doctors who are getting the inside track. It is as up to date as the people who have to wait in pain for the simple reason that they cannot afford to pay for operations—very up to date.

In all those actions, the Government claim that they are somehow "devolving" vital decisions to individuals and to families. In reality, the Government are doing the opposite. In reality, the Government are abdicating their responsibility to individuals and to families. That is the only honest way to describe policies which make no provision for child care or for nursery education, policies which reintroduce the 11-plus and secondary modern schools—something that they always forgo to mention—and policies which mock choice when schools choose pupils and parents instead of pupils and parents choosing schools.

"Abdication" is the only honest word to describe health policies which have no real regard for the health and welfare care of the infirm elderly in our country, policies which perpetually increase prescription and other charges, and policies which make treatment dependent on whether the health authority contract with the hospital stretches far enough to deal with the needs of individual patients.

Those policies are wrong. Their malevolence does not arise from the effect that they have on providers—the "producer interests", as they are sometimes called. Primary school children in classes of more than 30—there are 1 million such children—are not "producer interests". Families who have to care for chronically sick and disabled loved ones at home without proper support are not "producer interests". Women on low incomes who need child care for their children in order to be able to get training and work are not "producer interests".

Those people and many more are all part of the great majority of the British people—the national community—who need good quality, publicly provided facilities. They will not be well served by opted-out, broken-up, pay-as-you-go health, education and social services. Their freedom of choice means nothing when there is little or no provision to choose from. Their freedom of opportunity is spurious when they have to take second-rate treatment in two-tier services. Many people know that already. Many more will tragically come to know it, and as they do, they will see that the Government's promise of choice and opportunity is fraudulent. They will recognise that the Government's commitment to a classless society is a pretence. They will realise that they are a Government who are not worthy of the country.

3.23 pm

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): I join the right hon. Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock) in congratulating my right hon. and hon. Friends on their excellent speeches this afternoon. My right hon. Friend the Member for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker) has, of course, starred in this debate before. In 1979, seconding the motion, he called for three things—top priority in the fight against inflation, more openness in Government, and reformed procedures of the House. This afternoon, I hope that my right hon. Friend will hear commitments that will please him on each of those fronts.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Mole Valley served with flair and distinction in several Cabinets from 1985: first, as Secretary of State for the Environment, then as Education Secretary, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Home Secretary. If I were to single out just one of his achievements, it would be his education reforms. By introducing the national curriculum and asserting the need for national standards, he initiated one of the most significant reforms of the past 13 years, and one that will stand the test of time for many years to come.

My right hon. Friend must be the only Education Secretary to have served in the artillery as an instructor to the Royal Libyan army. *[Interruption.]* It was in the early 1950s. Perhaps that experience was a good preparation for his later years. It certainly taught him over many years where to direct his political shot and shell, as we saw again this afternoon.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Will the Prime Minister give way?

The Prime Minister: Among all his duties, as the right hon. Member for Islwyn said, my right hon. Friend the Member for Mole Valley has since 1980 found time to publish four anthologies. In view of the publicity given to those volumes this afternoon, I invite hon. Members to buy now while the stocks last. So good are they that I was tempted to make them part of the national curriculum. But my right hon. Friend's modesty in not doing so himself dissuaded me.

I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Gedling (Mr. Mitchell) reads my right hon. Friend's books with as much pleasure as I do. There may perhaps be just one poem in them which he does not much care for. In "Unauthorised versions: Poems and their Parodies", my right hon. Friend included Chesterton's "Cider Song". This may well awaken unhappy memories for my hon. Friend the Member for Gedling. I understand that when he was at school he lost a mock election to the SDCP. It was not a forerunner of the party of the right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown)—at least I think not. It was the Somerset Cider Drinkers' party. I believe that it was a particularly devastating defeat for my hon. Friend.

Like my right hon. Friend the Member for Mole Valley, my hon. Friend the Member for Gedling has experience of the armed forces, having served in the United Nations peacekeeping force in Cyprus. No doubt that will be invaluable experience if my hon. Friend ever joins my right hon. Friend's Whips Office. But I suspect that he may well be wary of such a posting after an early experience when he should have been in the House for a vote, was in the House for a vote, but could not be found by the Whips. A phone call from the Whips Office was made to my hon. Friend's home. My hon. Friend's wife was out. The babysitter answered and, as she told my hon. Friend on his return, "This strange man rang for you, but I had to put the phone down when he began to talk about whipping." I share with the right hon. Member for Islwyn congratulations for both my right hon. Friend the Member for Mole Valley and my hon. Friend the Member for Gedling on their speeches this afternoon.

For the first time since 1826, Madam Speaker, a Government have been returned to office for a fourth successive term. In the next five years we plan a reforming programme: a programme to return to people more control over their own lives; a programme to encourage and build up the private sector; a programme to improve public services. The Gracious Speech is but the first instalment of that programme in this Parliament.

Our programme is about trusting people and encouraging them to rise as fast and as far as they can—to create, through their enterprise, the prosperity that enables us to take care of others. And we believe in empowering people: in giving individuals more power over their own lives, and the Government less power over people's lives. The power to choose—and the right to own.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Will the Prime Minister give way?

The Prime Minister: Later.

So we will widen choice and extend opportunity in education; in the workplace; in housing; in transport. We will continue to reform all our public services, to make them more responsive to the citizen—and to get the best value for taxpayer's money. That way we can improve our services and still leave people more of their own money to spend. Measures to achieve these aims were set out in the Gracious Speech.

Before I turn to the legislative programme, let me mention other matters high on our agenda. I propose to make reforms at the very heart of government. We will sweep away many of the cobwebs of secrecy which needlessly veil too much of Government business.

We shall shortly publish for the first time the full list of ministerial Cabinet Committees, with their terms of reference and membership. We shall make available to the House the guidance on procedure and the conduct of business that has long been sought by many right hon. and hon. Members.

I have also asked my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster to identify other areas where there may be excessive secrecy and to carry forward the moves already under way, across Government, towards greater openness.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Will the Prime Minister give way?

The Prime Minister: In a moment.

As part of this open government initiative the Government have concluded that the time has come to acknowledge publicly the continuing existence of the secret intelligence service. SIS is a service distinct and separate from the security service. It provides foreign intelligence and overseas support in furtherance of the Government's foreign, defence, security and economic policies.

The chief of the SIS is appointed by the Foreign Secretary, in consultation with the Prime Minister, to whom he has direct access upon demand. He is responsible for the effectiveness, efficiency and security of the SIS and, in particular, for ensuring that information is obtained and disseminated only for the purposes that I mentioned earlier. The present chief of the SIS, the man colloquially known as "C", is Sir Colin McColl. We intend to introduce legislation to place the secret intelligence service on a statutory basis.

Successive Governments have not commented on matters relating to security and intelligence. The reason for that is clear to the House: it is difficult to comment without revealing, by what is or is not said, information that can have a bearing on the effectiveness and safety of the staff of these services. Therefore, I have deliberately distinguished today between acknowledging the existence of the SIS and commenting on operational information. That is a distinction which the Government will continue to maintain.

Mr. Simon Hughes: The Prime Minister has talked about the necessary accountability and openness of government—reform at the heart of government itself. I am sure that that will be acceptable to the House. However, he has not yet said anything about the reform of the method of government. Given that, as he has rightly said, he has won a fourth term—I congratulate him—but given that this was the sixth consecutive election at which a third or less of the British people have supported the Government and the 14th consecutive election at which fewer than 50 per cent. of those voting have supported the Government, when will we—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. If the House comes to order, I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will conclude his sentence.

Mr. Hughes: When will we have not only a classless society, but a properly democratic society as well?

Mr. Skinner: Some 82 per cent. voted against PR and the Liberal Democrats.

The Prime Minister: For once I can share common cause with the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner). It may not happen all that often, which may be a comfort to both of us, but on this occasion I can share common cause with the hon. Gentleman. Perhaps I will leave it at that.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Mole Valley set out clearly the difficulties that many countries in Europe are experiencing with proportional representation. Although I understand the concerns and feelings of grievance of the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes), it is not in the interests of this country to have weak government and a Government unable to command a majority in this House.

Mr. Winnick: While I welcome what the Prime Minister has just said—indeed both statements—will he confirm that the security service, unfortunately, will not be subject to parliamentary scrutiny? I wish it would be. Can he explain why, if recent articles in *The Guardian* are correct, some of the documents relating to the Nazi wartime occupation of the Channel islands are classified until 2045? If the Prime Minister is so keen that there should be no secrecy and that people should have confidence in knowing what has happened, should not those documents be released into the public domain as quickly as possible? As for the person who has been named—Kurt Klebeck—

Madam Speaker: Order. Let us begin as we mean to continue. Interventions must be interventions. The hon. Gentleman realises they they must not be long speeches.

Mr. Winnick: I shall conclude my intervention, Madam Speaker. I am pleased to be able to raise this point.

Will the Prime Minister ask the West German authorities whether that person, who was undoubtedly involved in Nazi killings, can be extradited? If not——

Madam Speaker: Order. The Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister: I cannot comment in detail on the hon. Gentleman's point. He knows that that is the position. As I said a moment ago, I have asked my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster to examine areas where we may be able to relax the present levels of secrecy. That examination should precede an announcement, but I thought it right to tell the House at an early stage that we intend to conduct that examination, and I hope that the hon. Gentleman is prepared to leave the matter there for the moment.

I have already put in place reforms to the structure of Government. I have set up two new Departments that will affect the whole fabric of our national life. The citizens charter will be at the centre of the Government's decision-making. Its objectives are to make public services more accountable and to ensure that they truly serve the customers who pay for them with their fares and taxation.

I have therefore also asked my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster to be responsible for the citizens charter programme and for the reform of the Civil Service. He will ensure that we set even tougher performance targets and extend further high quality, responsive public services to the individual citizen.

I have also established a Department for National Heritage, responsible for the arts, sports, broadcasting, films and our architectural heritage.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): What a nice little earner.

The Prime Minister: If that is a job application from the hon. Gentleman, may I say that he lacks some of the necessary qualifications. However, I shall bear him in mind when we next have the occasion to meet at Stamford Bridge.

In gathering those responsibilities together in one Department under a Cabinet Minister, I wanted to demonstrate the importance which the Government attach to them and to provide a strong voice at the centre of Government to speak for the needs of our national culture and heritage. That heritage is woven from distinctive strands from all four corners of the United Kingdom. Union is not uniformity. So we will ensure that the

individuality of all parts of the United Kingdom is respected. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales will, for example, be introducing a Welsh Language Bill this Session to strengthen the position of the language in Wales.

As I made clear during the election, the paramount importance of the unity of the United Kingdom and the union between Scotland and England is clear. I make no bones about repeating that. This Government stand firmly and four square for the Union. We want to see the ties between the two countries strengthened, not weakened, throughout this Parliament.

A great strength of our constitution has been its capacity to accommodate change—to evolve. We shall therefore look at ways in which Government could be more responsive to Scotland's needs. But the Union itself is not negotiable.

Mr. Dennis Canavan (Falkirk, West): Just before the recent general election, when questioned in Scotland about the Scottish constitutional question, the Prime Minister said that he would take stock of the Scottish election result. At the general election, the Conservative party was rejected by three quarters of Scottish voters, who voted for parties committed to the setting up of a Scottish Parliament. If the Prime Minister refuses to accept that interpretation of the Scottish election result, will he do the decent, democratic thing and hold a multi-option referendum on Scotland's constitutional future or is he, in the words of his predecessor, too frit?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman glosses over the fact that 62 per cent. of the electorate voted against the Labour party. We entered the last general election with the hon. Gentleman and many other Opposition Members suggesting that the Conservative party would lose seats in Scotland, would have no seats left in Scotland and would dramatically lose votes in Scotland. It increased votes, it increased seats and it increased influence, which is what it will continue to do in the months and years ahead. I undertook to take stock and see what we could do to make the Government more responsive to the needs of Scotland —that I intend to do, but in a way that will not damage the Union, the interests of Scotland or the interests of the United Kingdom. The hon. Gentleman need be in no doubt about that.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): I am grateful to the Prime Minister. He says that he believes that there should be changes at the heart of Government and that there should be increased accountability. Surely that should be reflected in his enabling and empowering the people of Scotland to express clearly their views on constitutional change. Why does he not envisage in the Gracious Speech and in the Government's programme such a democratic facility?

The Prime Minister: I think that, from every part of this country, the constituents send Members of Parliament here to this place to express their constituents' views on all matters. The voice of Scotland is represented on the Opposition Benches and on the Government Benches. In my experience in the House, the voice of Scotland has always spoken up forcefully in all parts of the House for Scotland's interests, which is the way that it should be.

We will take stock of the present position in Scotland and then report back to the House. It is a matter of some importance and we will proceed with it. We are proceeding with it now, and when we have concluded, we shall report back to the House.

We shall also continue our determined assault on the problems of Northern Ireland. The courage of the people of Northern Ireland is undoubted. They have the assurance that we shall not turn our back on their needs. Our overriding aim is to eliminate the evil of terrorism, and to do that we shall make progress on security, and in the social, political and economic spheres.

A further institutional reform is important to the whole House. I refer to the recommendations of the Committee chaired by my right hon. Friend the Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling) into the procedures debated by the previous Parliament. But I believe that the present Parliament must also discuss them before decisions can be taken. Therefore, we shall make time available for debate and undertake further consultations. I believe, personally, that the time has come for some of our procedures to be reformed, although that is essentially a matter for the House.

Mr. Skinner: We are not going to give the right hon. Gentleman an easy time.

The Prime Minister: I would never expect an easy time from the hon. Member for Bolsover. Indeed, it would be very boring if he were to give anybody an easy time. I strongly suspect that the hon. Gentleman does not give his own Labour party Front Bench team an easy time.

Mr. Michael Jopling (Westmorland and Lonsdale): Does the Prime Minister understand that his comments on the recent report on the sittings of the House by the Select Committee are most helpful and welcome? Does he recall that previous proposals for change, particularly the Crossman proposal 25 years ago, failed largely because they did not have the support of a broad band across the House? Does he remember that the recent all-party Committee was unanimous in its findings? Does he also realise that many hon. Members would very much welcome Government action that would mean that the changes would take effect from when the House returns after the summer recess?

The Prime Minister: I believe that my right hon. Friend's points are well made. As I said, we shall consult interested parties on the matter and lay a debate before the House to take the collective view of hon. Members.

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): May we take it for granted that the reforms that the Prime Minister has in mind in the light of the report of the Procedure Committee and of the idea of giving power back to the people will include scrutiny of the Government by a Select Committee on Northern Ireland, to be set up at the earliest possible opportunity?

The Prime Minister: That is one of the matters that we will consider, but I can give the hon. Gentleman no assurance this afternoon.

The Government were returned at this election because we spoke for certain great truths. George Bernard Shaw —no Tory he—wrote that

"all great truths begin as blasphemies",

and for many years the received wisdom denied many truths: the truth that lower taxes create more wealth for better welfare; the truth that competition produces better

[The Prime Minister]

services at lower cost; and the truth that less state control makes for a better state. Those truths are now accepted by the vast majority of people in this country, and the latest election endorsed that process. People voted for greater choice and the freedom that flows from it.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Will the Prime Minister give way?

The Prime Minister: If the hon. Gentleman will forgive me, I have given way generously and I would like to make a little progress.

I was referring to the freedom of people to keep more of their own money, to freedom from the fear of inflation and to freedom from state interference and the excessive influence of trade unions—and I refer only to the "excessive" influence of trade unions. Even today, as this debate is being conducted, we are witnessing an extremely important leadership election in which the trade unions wield the largest share of votes. Many of those votes will represent trade union members who voted Conservative at the last general election, as millions of them did. So whoever is elected as leader of the Labour party will rely on Conservative votes to become Leader of the Opposition; when the next general election comes he can rely on Conservative votes to keep him as Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Campbell-Savours *rose*——

The Prime Minister: Some unions may not even bother to ballot their members. The right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) has recognised that inequity—and he wants it changed, but not now, not until he is safely home and dry. To paraphrase St. Augustine, "Give me goodness Lord, but not just yet".

Now that the general election is over we see signs of renewed confidence. Business surveys have immediately reflected stronger prospects. The stock market has risen by over 10 per cent., and sterling has risen to DM 2·92. This week we made the ninth successive reduction in British interest rates since we joined the exchange rate mechanism. The latest cut in bank base rates has already led to a further cut in mortgage rates.

This renewed confidence in Britain flows from the economic policies that we laid before the British people, policies designed to encourage the creation of wealth in Britain and for Britain. We understand that without wealth there can be no welfare and without welfare we cannot discharge our responsibilities.

Later this month we will introduce the Finance Bill to enact outstanding measures from the Budget——

Mr. Canavan: Not again. The last one was rubbish.

The Prime Minister: It is worth having another. Like so many Conservative Budgets, this one once more delivered cuts in income tax. Every taxpayer will benefit, while nearly 4 million taxpayers on low incomes will pay tax at the new 20p rate—young people starting out in their careers, many women working part time and many disabled people. Our aim in these cuts is to encourage effort and reward endeavour at every level.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Will the Prime Minister give way on that very point?

The Prime Minister: I have given way generously——

Madam Speaker: Order. The Prime Minister has made it clear that he is not giving way.

The Prime Minister: The 20p band shows the way ahead to further tax reductions. We can steadily extend it up the income scale, so that, as and when prudent, more and more people pay income tax only at this lower rate.

Both the Budget and the manifesto made clear our determination to pursue the fight against inflation. Within the framework of the exchange rate mechanism and with the support of sound monetary and fiscal policies we have the opportunity to do as well as and better than our European competitors. Our aim is to restore to this country the security of stable prices, and our plans on fiscal matters are clearly set out in the Red Book.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: The Prime Minister was pressed by my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition to say how he intended to balance the budget over the medium term. Will the Prime Minister give an honest answer? Will he increase the burden of taxation over the medium term? Does he rule that out?

The Prime Minister: I am surprised by the first part of the hon. Gentleman's question because he knows as well as any hon. Member that the plans about the change in the fiscal deficit are clearly set out in the Red Book. They are there for the House to examine. They were there before the election and they are there now, and we shall seek to stick to them until we have a balanced budget. The direction is clear. We saw the cyclical rise of the fiscal deficit during the recession, and as we come out of recession that deficit will begin to fall. We have made that entirely clear to hon. Members time and again.

Mr. Skinner: When will the books be balanced?

The Prime Minister: I shall not give way to the hon. Gentleman. I have already dealt with that question but the hon. Gentleman clearly does not understand it.

We shall take forward the crusade against over-regulation and state interference that stifled free enterprise for so long. We shall resist any pressure from whatever source—domestically or from Brussels—to reimpose handicaps on our industry that we removed one by one in the 1980s. Not for us the interventionism that would put people out of work, with minimum wages and artificial restrictions on working times. Not for us either the damaging paraphernalia of the social chapter.

We shall continue to encourage opportunity in a labour market, free of unnecessary restrictions, and we shall develop the reforms of industrial relations that have brought peace to the workplace. As set out in our manifesto, we propose to introduce legislation to increase the rights of ordinary trade union members, to require proper notice to be given of an intention to strike, and to give every user of public services the right to restrain the disruption of those services by unlawful industrial action. Never again should the people who depend on our public services be held to ransom by illegal strikes.

We shall also extend the benefits of privatisation. It has extended share ownership to millions who would never have dreamed of owning shares before. Millions of workers now own shares in their own industries, and all over the world other countries are now following our lead with those policies. Even the Labour party paid a grudging

tribute to our success. Of course, that tribute was the dog that did not bark—the concealment of clause four. The Opposition dare not commit themselves to reverse every privatisation. They would like to, but they dare not. The hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) would renationalise water and the hon. Member for Kingston-upon-Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) would apparently renationalise the lot—[HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] Clearly, he has support for that. I am grateful to hon. Members—not for the first time.

Privatisation is a great aid to efficiency. It has transformed many loss leaders into world leaders—dead weight to heavy weight—but I am not sure that even a privatised leadership election could manage that trick for the Opposition.

We now propose to return British Coal to the private sector, and we shall introduce legislation to enable the private sector to operate rail services and to encourage competition. At the same time, we shall safeguard the national network of services, and provide subsidy where necessary. We want to recover a sense of pride in our railways and recapture the spirit of the old regional companies.

Industrial relations and privatisation are crucial to our continued economic success. Equally, so is the quality of education. For too long, education reflected the views of professionals to the virtual exclusion of parents. For too long parents found the education establishment more difficult to break into than Fort Knox. In the last Session we changed that. Parents will now receive clear, consistent information about their child's education. Many people regarded that as outrageous; astounding. The truly astounding thing is that it has not always been normal practice. Schools will be inspected once every four years and, under the national curriculum, children will learn a core of essential knowledge to meet the demands of adult life and the modern world.

In just over two years grant-maintained schools have proved their worth. Already over one in 10 secondary schools has balloted its parents on grant-maintained status, and many more now plan to do so. We intend to extend the benefits of self-government. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science will publish a White Paper by the end of the summer and an education Bill this autumn.

Mr. Bruce Grocott (The Wrekin): Will the Prime Minister give way? My point is on education.

The Prime Minister: Our target is to raise standards, widen choice and open up opportunity for hundreds of thousands of children. We shall have a lengthy debate over many days. My right hon. Friend will be returning to this issue.

We also want more choice for local authority tenants and leaseholders. Under a new housing and urban development Bill, local authority tenants will be able to join a rent-to-mortgage scheme. They will have the chance to buy a share in their homes, with mortgage payments no greater than their rent. It should help tenants whose current income is not quite enough for them to benefit under existing right-to-buy legislation. In addition, right to repair will be extended. Leaseholders of flats will have new rights either to buy the freehold collectively or to extend their leases.

The Bill will also implement our manifesto commitment to create a new urban regeneration agency. Too much land still lies idle, especially in our inner cities. Idle land means lost hopes, lost opportunities and lost chances for people living there. The agency will bring vacant and derelict property back into use. It will bring more jobs, more wealth and more hope to our urban areas.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for National Heritage will introduce legislation to create a single national lottery. Hundreds of millions of pounds will be raised to foster the arts, to encourage sport and to sustain our voluntary bodies. It will provide funding on a hitherto unprecedented scale. It will improve massively our arts and sports facilities. It will help to preserve our heritage and perhaps create new buildings for us to hand on to our children. It will help support the network of voluntary bodies of which this country can be so proud, and with which it is uniquely blessed.

During the next few weeks the House will debate the legislation that is needed to implement the agreement that we reached at Maastricht. At Maastricht, my right hon. Friends and I argued successfully for policies debated and agreed by the House. The House endorsed the results on our return.

Shortly after the debate on the Maastricht Bill we shall take on the presidency of the European Community. We face issues that are vital to the health of the Community and the interests of this country: completion of the single market, continued reform of the common agricultural policy, negotiation of the Community's future finances and the first steps towards the Community's enlargement. These are far-reaching objectives and their achievement will involve hard negotiation—negotiation in which, as President, this country will take the lead. I can assure my right hon. Friend the Member for Mole Valley that we shall continue to argue strongly for our national interests as well as for the interests of the Community as a whole. I agree with him that for the Community to succeed it must stay in tune with the democratic wishes of its citizens. The Community must adapt to those wishes across Europe.

It will fall to the United Kingdom also to manage the Community's relations with the rest of the world. No task is more important than developing our relationship with the former Soviet Union and eastern Europe. The west is now helping them on an unprecedented scale. Britain has led in successfully promoting Russian membership of the International Monetary Fund. We have won support for a stabilisation fund. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer has played a crucial role in negotiating these measures to help the Russian reforms succeed.

The survival of fledgling democracy in the east must be the top foreign affairs priority of those of us in the west. It is partly for that reason that Britain has championed the enlargement of the Community. Austria, Finland and Sweden have already applied. I hope that they will join by 1995, and Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia by the year 2000.

One crucial element over the coming year will be European security. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence will enlarge on that issue later in the debate. We start with a system of defence that is built upon the continuing American presence in Europe. The Gulf war showed how crucial that presence is to the defence of our common interests.

Mr. Dalyell: Will the Prime Minister give way?

The Prime Minister: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will forgive me, but I wish to make some progress. Many other hon. Members are waiting to speak.

Increasingly, countries that join the European Community will also join the Western European Union, as the European pillar of a common defence effort; but, if the need ever again arose, it would be through NATO that the members of the WEU would defend themselves. Any European country joining the WEU will still look to NATO—including the American presence in Europe—for its defence. That is the reality; it is also good sense.

I was the first Head of Government of the Group of Seven to undertake to attend the Rio summit. I shall go backed by our commitment to the target of returning carbon dioxide emissions to 1990 levels by the year 2000, provided that others will do the same. We hope to sign global conventions on biological diversity and climate change.

We are continuing to work for agreement in the GATT trade talks. Too much progress has been made to allow the remaining gap to lead to a breakdown. These issues require constant management, constant vigilance and constant diplomatic effort. We shall need all the means at our disposal.

Mr. Dalyell: Is there not enough environmental destruction in the world already, without the possibility of yet more? Will the Prime Minister rule out any military attack on Libya—especially in view of the fact that the lawyers acting for Pan Am's insurers now have the gravest doubts about the whole case, and about whether the Libyan state was involved? Even Pan Am's insurers' lawyers are doubtful.

The Prime Minister: No, I am afraid that I cannot accommodate the hon. Gentleman's wishes and rule that out.

Within the time available today, I have not been able to deal with all the plans that we have set out for this Session, but I have sketched in the majority of the most important. All those plans are geared to maintain a country that is respected abroad and has self-respect at home—a country in which, increasingly, everyone may realise his or her aspirations; a country in which people are able not only to get their feet on to one rung, but to scale the whole height of the ladder if they have the will and the skills to do so. There must be no barriers—no glass ceilings. I do not want people to be "cabined, cribbed, confined" by the action of the state.

This Government have the vision to take the United Kingdom forward into the 1990s. They have the experience, the skills and the competence, and, after the election, they have the confidence of the country. The wide-ranging programme outlined in the Gracious Speech demonstrates that that confidence was well placed. I commend it to the House.

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. During the general election campaign I had an opportunity to talk to a large number of my constituents. Many asked why certain Members of Parliament were in the habit of making frequent sedentary interventions, and were apparently allowed to get away with it.

I am sure, Madam Speaker, that it would benefit the whole House—particularly new Members, and more particularly some of the older ones—if you, as the new Speaker, made a statement at an early stage about the attitude that you will take to sedentary interventions and, indeed, to points of order.

Madam Speaker: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his advice. I shall let him know when I am ready to make a statement to that effect.

4.3 pm

Mr. Paddy Ashdown (Yeovil): Perhaps I should start by thanking the hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Devlin) for what was—as far as I was concerned, at any rate—a very timely point of order.

I join the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition in congratulating the right hon. Member for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker), who proposed the response to the Gracious Address, and the hon. Member for Gedling (Mr. Mitchell), who capably seconded the motion. The latter wishes that he has a future; the former wishes that he did not have a past.

I must confess that I found nothing particularly odd in the right hon. Gentleman's partial and badly informed view of proportional representation. Such views should not surprise us, coming from someone who has been in charge of Conservative party propaganda. I thought it rather odd, however, that the Prime Minister—perhaps providing evidence of a somewhat wicked sense of humour—should ask the right hon. Gentleman to propose the response to the Gracious Address, given that the right hon. Gentleman was responsible for nearly all the real disasters that occurred in previous Government programmes. For my hon. Friends and, I suspect, for many others, almost the most frightening of the Prime Minister's choices in his new Cabinet, as testimony of his determination to have a successful Government, was to commit the right hon. Gentleman to the Back Benches. Nothing could have shown more surely that he is serious about seeking to succeed.

I should like to join the right hon. Member for Mole Valley in his words about the Leader of the Opposition. I do not know whether this is the last time we shall have the pleasure of hearing the right hon. Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock) at the Dispatch Box leading for his party since the leadership election is a few months away. However, if this is the last time, I should like to say that many of us who do not share his views or belong to his party have, nevertheless, looked with great admiration on his leadership of the Labour party. He has done an immense and historic service to his party. In my view, the service extends beyond that to the Labour party to the country at large. By ensuring that his party more nearly matches the mood and spirit of the nation than was the case when he took over, he has strengthened our democracy.

I congratulate the Prime Minister on his election victory. It was a considerable personal achievement in which he is entitled to have some pride. The Government are now entitled to our good will in their task of governing our country, especially if they take the strong action necessary to get the country going again and to get people back to work. A wise Prime Minister would reject the triumphalism that has been evident in some quarters of his party. A wise Prime Minister might reflect on the fact that his victory was won not so much on the basis of enthusiasm for Conservative policies or on the Conservative party's record but out of fear of what the Labour party had to offer. Perhaps the Prime Minister

senses that, as he has spoken of a Government who will be gentler in their approach. The tone of his speech seemed to carry that forward. He has told us that he will be more concerned with constructing consensus and more committed to building a nation that is, in his phrase, "at ease with itself". If that is so, the change of style will be welcomed, and my hon. Friends and I will respond to it.

The central question on which the new Administration and the Prime Minister will be judged is this: having been given this opportunity, what does he intend to use it for? We now have the curious spectacle of a Government and an official Opposition who have abandoned their previous creeds—Thatcherism and socialism, respectively—because those creeds made them unelectable, but each has yet to find anything appropriate to replace them.

The Government tells us—it was at the centre of the Prime Minister's speech—that their big idea is opportunity. If that is proved to be so, it is welcome, but we shall need more than words in a Gracious Speech to make that point. For millions in our country, opportunity has died rather than grown in the past 13 years. Where is the opportunity for those in rural areas who have seen their public transport vanish with the privatisation of the bus service? Where are the opportunities for poor students who have seen loans and cutbacks put higher education beyond their reach? Where are the opportunities for the young who crowd into our surgeries looking for homes that the Government have refused to allow councils to build for them? Where are the opportunities for those who live in squalor in our tumbledown inner cities which the Government promised to put right, just as they do now, but then forgot? Where are the opportunities for those who rely on our education system to provide them with escape routes but who now see that system increasingly demoralised, confused and underfunded? If the Government are really to live up to the Prime Minister's rhetoric, and the words in the speech, they will get a genuine welcome from the Liberal Democrats.

I see little or no sign of such a change in the Queen's Speech. Indeed, such signs as there are seem to point in the opposite direction. In the past the Prime Minister has said:

> "Nothing is more important than education to ensure all our young people have the opportunities they deserve".

I agree, but what does he intend to do about it?

In the Gracious Speech it was said that the Government would raise standards in education, but those are empty words unless the Government are prepared to increase investment in education—which, as a percentage of national wealth, has declined rather than increased over the past 13 years. If the Government are serious about those words, we must ask whether the process will be reversed. It seems that it will not. Indeed, quite the opposite: the election was only a few weeks ago, but already a new round of education cuts has begun. Many councils are now leaving teaching posts unfilled, and others are cutting staff. Her Majesty's inspectors of schools now estimate that nearly half our schools are using inappropriate buildings. In a recent report the Audit Commission tells us that there are £4 billion worth of repairs outstanding to the fabric of our educational institutions, and that after 13 years of Conservative Government one third of all lessons are still unsatisfactory.

I have looked in vain in the Government's programme in the Gracious Speech for a commitment to tackling the problems of underinvestment which blight the opportunities of so many of our children. All that I have seen has been more educational dogma of the sort that has created such damaging innovation fatigue in education over the past 13 years. Now that appears to be spiced with a little personal neo-Victorianism from the new Secretary of State for Education. That will not bring opportunities to education; all that it will bring is more confusion, uncertainty and disruption—and fewer chances and opportunities for those who pass through our education system.

The Prime Minister spoke of opting out and of grant-maintained schools, but neither he nor the Government have answered the question about their long-term aim for grant-maintained schools: do the Government want all schools to opt out?

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): Will they allow them all to opt out?

Mr. Ashdown: Indeed, will the Government allow all schools to opt out? The latest information is that opting out is such a good idea that some people will be refused access to it—that some schools will not be allowed to opt out. If all schools are to be allowed grant-maintained status the Prime Minister must tell the House where the extra funding will come from. If that is not to be allowed, is it not true that the Prime Minister's "Opportunity Britain" will tolerate—indeed, will create—a two-tier education system? Those questions must be answered before we know about the progress of the Government's programme.

I fear for much in Britain under this Government. I fear for the cohesion of our social structure, and for the underfunded national health service. I fear that we shall not do what is necessary to put the economy really right in the long term. But most of all, I fear for our education system under this Government. I do not believe that the Government understand what education is about, or the vital importance of investing in education now, for the nation's future.

Mr. Michael Colvin (Romsey and Waterside): The right hon. Gentleman has twice criticised the Government for cuts in education spending. I wish that he would check the record. If he did, he would find that since the Government came to power in 1979, spending per pupil—which is what really counts—has increased by 50 per cent. in real terms. Will the right hon. Gentleman please check the record before making such statements?

Mr. Ashdown: The reason for that is the drop in school rolls and school numbers——

Mr. Colvin: No.

Mr. Ashdown: I take the point, but I make the opposite point to that made by the hon. Gentleman, whom I know to be a reasonable man. Does he recognise that, whereas every other advanced nation has increased the percentage of national wealth invested in education in the past 10 years, ours has been decreased? If the situation is as the hon. Gentleman describes it, how is it that council after council, including my own in Somerset which strives for the best education in the county that it can—I may disagree with its political colour, but I know that it

[Mr. Ashdown]

genuinely strives for that—is having to leave teaching posts unfilled? How can that be so if the situation is as good as the hon. Gentleman suggests?

The immediate test that the Government face is the economic test. Some say that the economy is at last pulling out of recession. I hope so. I fear that that will not be of much comfort or immediate assistance to those who have lost their jobs or are in danger of losing them in the near future. Was the Prime Minister wise to sound quite so triumphalist about that in his recent speech to the Institute of Directors? The Prime Minister may deny that. As an event, the speech seemed to have all the razzmatazz of an election rally—a kind of rich man's Sheffield after the event. I believe that the Prime Minister's speech on that occasion will be a rich mine for quotations in the months and weeks ahead as we see how the economy develops. The Prime Minister has grabbed his success slightly before it is firm in his hands or established in recovery.

Mr. Kirkwood: Ask George Younger.

Mr. Ashdown: Indeed. George Younger himself showed a rather clearer and more balanced approach than the Prime Minister did with his euphoria today. The Prime Minister seemed to imply in his speech that Britain's problems were now solved, that the rest of the world was making a path to our door and that there were only sunlit uplands ahead. If that is the Government's attitude, I must say to the Prime Minister that I believe it to be dangerously complacent.

Even if the recession is over—and many business people are far from convinced of that—the underlying weaknesses in our economy persist and it will require sustained and effective Government action to put them right.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): What are they?

Mr. Ashdown: I will come to that in a moment.

The recent decline in inflation, culminating in yesterday's desperately needed interest rate reduction, is welcome, even if the process of gettitng there has cost the country so much in jobs, in business failures and in personal misery. If all that pain is not to be wasted, we need policies for sustained low inflation and stable low interest rates. That requires three actions: first, and most immediately, a move to the narrow band of the European monetary system; secondly, a commitment to establish the operational independence of the Bank of England; and, thirdly, ditching the unnecessary and damaging opt-out clause on our entry into the European monetary union. I see no commitment to any of those actions in the Government's programme. Unless the Prime Minister and the Government make those changes, Britain will be condemned in the years ahead, even if there is a recovery now, to plunge once again around the back-breaking cycle of boom and bust which we have experienced twice under this Government—once under the Prime Minister's premiership and chancellorship.

I also see no commitment to the steps that are needed massively to increase competition in our economy, further to stimulate enterprise, to create greater flexibility in the labour market or to give employees a greater stake in the firms for which they work.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman. He has just clearly advocated our membership of the exchange rate mechanism, and has urged the House and the Government to go into the narrow band. Does he accept that the ERM is both an advantage and a disadvantage? If Germany, through its powerful currency, continues to use only high interest rates rather than increasing taxation in Germany to solve its reunification problem, we shall have growing problems within Europe as a whole and in this country in particular. Will the right hon. Gentleman urge the Chancellor of Germany to increase taxes to contribute to the solution of that country's problems?

Mr. Ashdown: The hon. Gentleman gives a very partial view. Anything that one does has advantages and disadvantages. The huge advantage of the ERM and the reason why we should stay in it—and, in my view, move to the narrow band—is that it has imposed disciplines that Britain has dodged for 40 years concerning wage rises and their impact on unemployment. There is now no realistic mechanism for dodging those disciplines. If Britain chose a way out of the ERM and its disciplines, the initial consequence might well be a short-term boost to the economy, but the inevitable long-term consequence would be not lower but higher unemployment.

We might also look in the Queen's Speech, which is supposed to be about opportunity, for some sign of opportunities for women—a reversal in the Government's policies on child benefit, perhaps, or the expansion of nursery provision—but there is no sign of those either. We might look for something giving opportunities to the ethnic minorities, but all that there is, in a year when the number of people applying for asylum has dropped by more than half, is a commitment to the return of the Asylum Bill, one of the worst and most discredited Bills of the last Parliament which—despite Labour's retreats in Committee—will be racist in its outcome even if it is not intended to be racist in its framework.

The Gracious Speech—the Government's programme—speaks of opportunity, but the Government's actions seem to me designed to continue to close opportunities off, as they have regularly been closed off during 13 years of Conservative government in Britain.

There are two external matters that the Government must address this year—the first is Europe and the second is the Brazil earth summit. The Government will know our view on Europe—a divided party and a confused policy drawn up a year ago, more in pursuit of unity in the Conservative party than in the best interests of Britain. Now the Government have their mandate, they can put internal party manoeuvring behind them.

Mr. Julian Brazier (Canterbury): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Ashdown: If the hon. Gentleman will forgive me, I should like to continue for a while as I want to give other hon. Members the opportunity to speak.

Britain takes over the presidency of Europe at a crucial time, with many European countries facing internal difficulties and many European institutions facing self-doubt. It would be very easy indeed for Europe to lose momentum at this stage. Perhaps that is what some in the Conservative party want—and many in the Labour party, too—but I hope that the Prime Minister will realise that Europe cannot stand still: if it does not go forwards, it will begin to go backwards, and a Community in retreat would be a Community that had dangerously lost its way just

when leadership was much needed in an increasingly turbulent and troubled continent. I urge the Prime Minister to combine his courage with what I believe are his true convictions and give a strong lead in Europe, ignoring the voices of his own party and showing that Britain does not have to lag behind in Europe but can give a lead in Europe.

In particular, I urge the Prime Minister to get rid of the opt-out on the social chapter. There is now a new and growing understanding in Europe of the undesirability of recreating, at European level, the old corporatist industrial structures and attitudes that we in Britain got rid of in the 1980s. Britain has a real chance to influence the social chapter in favour of liberal markets, a more flexible approach to employees' rights and a more flexible labour market. I hope that the Prime Minister will take that chance, which is a considerable one for him and for Europe.

We also hear that the Government are at last prepared to consider voting reform for the next European election. Let us be clear that it is one thing for the House to be distorted in its representation by our voting system but quite another to unbalance the make-up of the European Parliament because we alone insist that our system must not be proportional. Unless the Government are prepared to give the people of Britain the same fair voting system for elections to the European Parliament that every other European citizen enjoys, their claims to be the Government of the citizen will be exposed as fraudulent. I hope that the Prime Minister will tackle that as well.

We hope and expect that the Government will take a lead at the earth summit in Brazil. Regrettably, the environment was barely mentioned during the general election, but it is one of the greatest challenges that mankind faces. I applaud the Government's recent, if belated, decision to reduce the period within which we stabilise carbon dioxide emissions, but the target that the Government have chosen is inadequate in the face of the urgency of the problem and still leaves Britain well behind other advanced nations. It is extremely depressing that the commitment to a powerful environmental protection agency, which was given by the Prime Minister and was promised in the recent Conservative party manifesto, finds no place in the Queen's Speech.

Why does the list of things to which aid might be linked not include progress in environmental areas as well as in economic and human rights areas? I cannot see how the Government can claim credentials on environment matters when they duck every tough decision that they have to take in that area.

There are welcome items in the Queen's Speech, but by and large they are small items. I greatly welcome the Prime Minister's agreement to acknowledge the existence of MI6. However, the public acknowledgement of something about which the nation was aware previously is a small item. It would have been a big item if the security services were made accountable to the scrutiny of a Select Committee of Privy Councillors in this House. If the Prime Minister really wants open government in this country, it would have been a big item to ensure that we at last had a freedom of information Bill, but there is no sign of that in the Queen's Speech.

There are other points about the tone of the Gracious Speech. It was inconceivable under the Prime Minister's predecessor that the Government's programme would have included a celebration of a visit by Her Majesty to the European Parliament or a statement in favour of rail transport.

We welcome the Government's commitment to increase rail use and to give private services access to the British Rail network provided that the profits from that are ploughed back into the rail system. We also welcome the citizens charter proposals to make the public service more responsive to the consumer, provided that they are matched by a commitment to invest in public services to improve quality for the consumer.

Behind all that, however, there is no evidence of a Government with a clear set of new ideas for our country. Instead, I see a Government who intend to stumble on after an election that they did not expect to win. We are told that this is to be a Government of opportunity. Britain needs a Government committed to widening opportunity and to providing escape routes for those who are trapped, but that would require investment in education and a commitment to housing. It would require giving greater chances to employees to share in the ownership and success of their jobs. It would require a new boost for individual enterprise and a programme to create greater flexibility in the labour market. It would require giving new chances to women, to ethnic minorities, to the poor and to the trapped. None of that is visible in the Government's programme in the Gracious Speech.

I fear that the Gracious Speech shows all too clearly that the Prime Minister was as surprised by his election victory as were many other people. Having obtained his mandate and opportunity, he has yet to propose a clear idea of how he intends to use it. I am reminded of the famous words of Winston Churchill who, when asked what he thought of a pudding, said, "It has no theme". Nor have the Government.

4.28 pm

Mr. David Knox (Staffordshire, Moorlands): I should like to thank you, Madam Speaker, for calling me at this early stage in the first debate that you are chairing as Speaker. I hope that I shall be equally fortunate in future in what I hope will be a long and which I know will be a distinguished Speakership.

I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Member for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker) and my hon. Friend the Member for Gedling (Mr. Mitchell) on their excellent speeches in proposing and seconding the Loyal Address. I remember the remarks of my right hon. Friend the Member for Mole Valley in 1979 about the balance between sycophancy and rebellion. He seems to have managed to achieve that balance very well immediately after 1979, and I hope that he and my hon. Friend the Member for Gedling will be equally successful in that respect in the next 13 years.

I should like to congratulate my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on leading the Conservative party to a fourth consecutive general election victory. Much of the credit for that victory belongs to my right hon. Friend, whose calm, quiet but firm leadership was in tune with the times and whose hopes and aspirations for the future were in line with those of the people of this country. My right hon. Friend now has a mandate in his own right: he can be his own man, and I believe that he will be his own man.

It is as well to remember that many people voted for other than Conservative candidates in the general election. The Conservative party polled more than 42 per cent. of

[Mr. David Knox]

the popular vote, and, in my view, that means that the Government should proceed with caution and restraint over the next few years.

In his first major speech after again becoming Prime Minister in 1951, Winston Churchill said:

"What the nation needs is several years of quiet, steady administration, if only to allow Socialist legislation to reach its full fruition."—[*Official Report*, 6 November 1951; Vol. 493, c. 68.]

Fortunately, we have had no socialist legislation since 1979, but we have had a great deal of reforming legislation in the past 13 years, particularly in the past five years, and it needs time to reach its full fruition. I am thinking particularly of the health and education reforms. With the return of a Conservative Government, the threat of reversing those reforms has now been removed. The aim in this Parliament should be to consolidate them.

Perhaps at this stage I should congratulate you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on your new appointment, and wish you many happy years in that post—generous, of course, to Back Benchers at all times.

Mr. Irvine Patnick (Sheffield, Hallam): Especially senior ones.

Mr. Knox: I did not say that.

I welcome very much the fact that the Gracious Speech does not outline too heavy a programme of radical legislation. No doubt there will be sufficient in the Gracious Speech to keep the House busy, but not too busy to prevent it from spending more time debating the broader issues of foreign and domestic policy, which are of much greater significance to the future of this country than much of the legislation that passes through the House.

The most important legislation which the House will consider in the coming Session is the Bill to implement the Maastricht agreement. As a passionate believer in the European Community, I welcome that legislation as a further step toward the strengthening of the Community. The Maastricht agreement confirmed the commitment in the treaty of Rome to

"an ever closer union among the peoples of Europe",

but, significantly, it added

"where decisions are taken as closely as possible to the citizens",

thus incorporating the principle of subsidiarity into Community legislation and practice. It is a principle that is widely accepted throughout the Community. It makes it clear that greater unity does not necessarily mean greater centralisation.

The Maastricht agreement also extends the legislative role of the European Parliament. I have never understood the attitude of opponents of membership of the European Community who criticise its lack of democratic accountability but, at the same time, are opposed to strengthening the European Parliament. Elected Parliaments are surely about democracy or they are about nothing. I understand that the Maastricht legislation will be introduced in the near future. I hope that it will have a trouble-free and speedy passage through the House, particularly as it will either immediately precede or coincide with Britain's presidency of the European Community.

Although Britain is not committed to joining a single currency under the Maastricht agreement, it is obviously desirable that we should do so. If we are able to do so, it is essential that our balance of payments problem should be resolved as quickly as possible. The current account of our balance of payments has now been in deficit for more than five years. The deficit peaked at more than £20 billion in 1989. It is estimated at £6·5 billion for this year. Although that is an improvement on 1989, it would be wrong to conclude that we can sit back and assume that the balance of payments will right itself in the next few years.

During the past three years economic growth has been strongly braked back. The economy has been in recession. In a recession the current account of the balance of payments improves. Imports of raw materials and manufactured goods fall, or at least stop rising. Firms with short domestic order books are forced to be more active in export markets—no bad thing in itself—and exports rise. Lower imports and higher exports combine to reflect a smaller deficit, or even a small surplus, but as soon as the economy starts to expand again the process goes into reverse. That has happened too often in the past to assume that it will not happen again this time. On top of that there is the fact that, although the reduction in the deficit is welcome, the deficit is still too large for an economy which is in recession.

The length of time that our current account has been in deficit and the size of the deficits suggest that there is something fundamentally wrong with the exchange rate and that the value of sterling is too high in relation to other currencies. As a consequence, British exports are dearer than they should be and therefore more difficult to sell overseas, while imports are cheaper than they should be and therefore easier to sell in this country.

In such circumstances, a downward adjustment in the value of sterling is both necessary and desirable. Of course, we are now in the exchange rate mechanism of the European monetary system and our freedom of manoeuvre is limited. I have supported British membership of the ERM for many years and I was delighted when we joined in 1990 when my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister was Chancellor of the Exchequer. Membership means that, for 60 per cent. of our trade, British importers and exporters enjoy the advantage of reasonably stable exchange rates. Importers know what they will pay and exporters know what they will be paid.

That is particularly advantageous for the manufacturing sector. Membership of the ERM is also an important tool in the battle against inflation. It is not just coincidental that the breakdown of the Bretton Woods regime of fixed exchange rates was followed by galloping inflation in Britain and elsewhere.

As one strongly committed to British membership of the ERM, I have no desire to undermine it, but it would have been strange if Britain had joined at exactly the right rate for sterling. Given the size and nature of our current account deficit, there is a strong case for an adjustment in the value of sterling within the mechanism. It would have to be a one-off adjustment. It would have to be made clear that it would not be repeated. Therefore, there would be no reason for anyone to believe that the discipline of the ERM would be undermined.

The adjustment would aim to ensure that sterling was at a level at which the current account of our balance of payments would be in balance in an average year. British exporters and importers would enjoy the advantages of stable exchange rates in their trade with other European countries. Britain would enjoy the benefits of the

anti-inflationary discipline of sterling fixed in the ERM. British interest rates could be lower because they would no longer be required to maintain sterling at an artificially high level. The economic prospects for Britain would be set fair for the next few years. We would be in a strong position to join a single currency later this decade.

I would like to touch on one other subject for a few moments—the situation in Scotland. I was pleased that the Conservative party did better than anticipated in the general election in Scotland and that it improved its position compared to 1987. But it got only 25 per cent. of the popular vote, and there is no point in pretending that it was other than a bad result. Although disproportionately large sums of central Government money have been and are being spent in Scotland, there is a great deal of evidence to show that the Government are out of touch with the mood of the Scottish people. Therefore, there is no room for complacency in the Conservative party about Scotland.

Obviously, the election result does not mean that the Government have no right to govern Scotland, any more than the failure of the Labour Governments of 1964 and 1974 to gain more votes in England deprived them of the right to govern England. It is as well to remember that we are still a united kingdom and that all the parties in this House, except for the nationalists, are committed to the Union. Although the Government have a right to govern Scotland, I hope that they will try to understand and respond to the hopes, aspirations and fears of the Scottish people.

I welcome the remarks of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister this afternoon, but I ask the Government to look again at the question of devolution. I supported the Labour Government's devolution proposals in the 1970s and I have never regretted doing so. I am worried that, if the Government continue to ignore the desire of the Scottish people to have a greater say over their own internal affairs, we may end up with a much more serious problem than we have now. Far from undermining the Union, devolution to Scotland would strengthen it. If the principle of subsidiarity is right for Britain in the European Community, surely it is also right for Scotland within the United Kingdom.

4.41 pm

Mr. Clive Betts (Sheffield, Attercliffe): First, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I congratulate you on your election to your new office and thank you for letting me catch your eye and be the first Member to make his maiden speech in this Parliament.

Secondly, I give my thanks and those of my constituents to my predecessor, Sir Patrick Duffy, who as Member for Sheffield, Attercliffe from 1970 was recognised for his diligence on behalf of his constituents and for his expertise, in particular, on defence matters. He was an Under-Secretary of State for Defence for three years during the 1970s, and afterwards he was the President of the North Atlantic Assembly where he did an excellent job ably. During my time as a candidate in the constituency I learned from many of my now constituents of the work that Sir Patrick did on their behalf, and the respect and esteem in which he was held. I am sure that it is right for me today to place that firmly on the record.

Thirdly, I thank my constituents for placing their confidence in me by electing me as their Member of Parliament. I want to serve all their individual interests, but there are also matters of particular and general concern to my constituency to which I shall refer this afternoon and which I hope to pursue in my time in the House.

My constituency is a diverse one. The name Attercliffe comes from the old, industrial part of the constituency, which was the heart of our nation's steel and engineering industry. Unfortunately, that heart is a little smaller than it was and beats a little more slowly than it did; yet it remains an important part of British industry. Unfortunately, unemployment in the constituency has risen two and a half times in the past 20 years. That is of considerable concern. I am determined to direct my efforts towards working with the city council and local industry, which have formed a partnership, to address in particular the twin problems of long-term and youth unemployment.

Workers in Sheffield are proud of their skills, traditions and good industrial relations. It is a tragedy that people who for years and generations used their skills to turn the scrap of this nation into steel and engineering products now see themselves consigned to the industrial scrap heap through unemployment. That cannot be tolerated. It is ironic that, as I begin a new life and career in this House at the age of 42, some of my constituents of the same age fear that they will never work again.

In addition to the old industrial part of my constituency, there are new areas of growth which almost comprise a new town in themselves. There are areas of new housing and young families where education is a key priority. My constituents desire an education service that is comprehensive, integrated and free at the point of delivery. If equality of opportunity and an equal start in life for the children of my constituents are to be a reality, educational opportunity must be available from the age of three, not five. I shall strive to achieve the development and advancement of comprehensive nursery education provision for all who want it.

The growth in new housing by and large is in housing for sale. It is right that people who choose and can afford to have a home of their own should be able to buy, but many people cannot afford to buy or choose not to buy and for them there must be the opportunity of a home for rent. In Sheffield we have a unique partnership scheme with private developers, housing associations and the local authority working together. I hope that I can continue to support and help that development which provides homes for rent for those who cannot afford any other form of home, while recognising the right of everyone, whatever his or her circumstances, to a decent home.

The issues of housing and education are important elements in local government and with my background I must recognise that. Local government is not just a provider of a whole variety of important services. From time to time, I shall undoubtedly draw attention in the House to the poor revenue support grant that the city of Sheffield gets. Opposition to the low amount of grant has come from all political parties on Sheffield city council together with the chamber of commerce. No doubt I shall return to that in future.

Just as I believe that local government services are important, I believe in the principle of local democracy, local accountability and subsidiarity. The best government for our people is conducted as close as possible to those who are governed. We in this House should recognise that

[Mr. Clive Betts]

the principle and value of local democracy is an important counterforce to the extremes of centralisation. I hope to argue that case in future.

In addition, the work of our local councils is of value and importance. People do not simply make a sacrifice on a voluntary basis for nothing. Many of our local councillors give up their time and that of their families on behalf of their constituencies and councils in the furtherance of local democracy and the pursuance of services. Often that effort and contribution goes unrewarded and unrecognised. I hope to return to that issue, which is of great importance.

Finally, I turn to two different issues which affect different members of my constituency. The first is Kashmir. Many of my constituents and their families originated in Kashmir. It is right that the House should place on record its concern about the atrocities, violence and confusion in countries such as Yugoslavia and the various states into which in the past few months it has broken up. It is right that we have condemned the atrocities and supported the principle of self-determination. Many of my constituents have relatives in Kashmir who fear for their lives. My constituents are worried about the atrocities and the abuses of civil rights there. I hope that we can have a debate on how to deal with that, so that we can place on the record our concern about those problems, and I hope that we can eventually return to the United Nations resolution passed more than 40 years ago that Kashmir should also have the right to self-determination.

You, Mr. Deputy Speaker, may not know that I am a member of the most exclusive club in the House of Commons. Its president is my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley); the chief supporters are my hon. Friends the Members for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) and for Sheffield, Heeley (Mr. Michie); and the team manager is my hon. Friend the Member for Bassetlaw (Mr. Ashton). I refer to the House of Commons Sheffield Wednesday supporters club and wish to be the first hon. Member to place on record my congratulations to Sheffield Wednesday on bringing European football to Sheffield for the first time in 20 years.

As I wish to offend neither my constituents nor my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Central (Mr. Caborn), may I also place on record my appreciation of Sheffield United's rapid rise up the table in the second half of the season. I look forward to renewed duals between the teams in the Premier League next season.

On a more serious note, I was unfortunately present on that terrible day when the disaster occurred at Hillsborough. I recognise the important work carried out and proposals made by the Taylor inquiry. I also recognise that in football, as in so many other matters that will come before the House in the next few years, we must have regard to proposals that are made in Europe. Nevertheless, if we are serious about taking account of consumers' views, the views of football supporters must also be considered when the House looks at the final proposals for football ground safety.

I was pleased that the new Secretary of State for National Heritage said the other day that he was willing to listen again to arguments, especially on all-seater stadiums, about which I have serious doubts. I shall wish to return to that issue in the future.

I conclude my first contribution in the House with those comments, as that issue consumes most of my time outside the House. I thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for letting me catch your eye, and hon. Members for their courtesy in listening to me.

4.53 pm

Sir Patrick McNair-Wilson (New Forest): I, too, congratulate you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on your elevation to high office. I hope that your burden will be lighter as a result of the private Bill reforms that were passed in the last Parliament.

I also have enormous pleasure in congratulating the hon. Member for Sheffield, Attercliffe (Mr. Betts). His predecessor, Sir Patrick Duffy, and I entered the House together 28 years ago. I entirely agree with the hon. Gentleman that all his colleagues felt great affection for him. The hon. Gentleman's speech has shown that his constituency of Attercliffe has chosen a worthy successor. Having listened to his remarks, I hope that we shall hear plenty more from him in the years ahead.

It is clear from the Gracious Speech that much of this Session will be devoted to matters relating to Europe. Indeed, Her Majesty said that not only will legislation be introduced but that she will visit many of the major European countries during the next year. Europe is now suffering grave political instability, partly because old regimes are coming under new pressures—I am thinking particularly of Germany—and partly because other countries, such as our French neighbours, have found that the operation of their socialist Administrations have caused great economic difficulties. The fact that the last Prime Minister of France, Mrs. Edith Cresson, lasted only 10 months is evidence of that. Belgium has a deep political problem, with the old difficulties between the Flemish and Walloons re-emerging once again, and Italy has just had another general election.

It is therefore extremely important that the House looks carefully at every step on the way to further European integration. It might not be unreasonable to suggest that, given the changes that have taken place in the past three years, the whole concept needs to go back to the drawing board. The Europe of today grew out of the concept of Mr. Monnet's idea of a balanced community—states of approximately the same political and economic weight. However, the re-emergence of a united Germany has clearly upset that balance. One day, Germany will not only be the largest member state, but will probably have the strongest economy and currency.

The Gracious Speech says:

"My Government will pursue, within the framework of the exchange rate mechanism, firm financial policies designed to achieve price stability and maintain the conditions necessary for sustained growth."

I recognise that that will be an extremely difficult task. We are currently members of an exchange rate mechanism in which the bench-mark currency is that of one of the countries in the greatest difficulty. It could be argued that the concept of choosing the deutschmark as the bench-mark currency should be reviewed and that we should not always be left with the same single European currency.

Mr. Delors has chosen this time of imbalance to escalate the argument for creating within Europe a separate European Government. I believe that most hon. Members would reject that concept. I listened with great interest to my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, Moorlands (Mr. Knox), because he is committed to the concept of a united Europe. Too many hon. Members, because they consider themselves "bien passant" with the concept of Europe—they have exchanges with friends in Europe and go there for their holidays—seem to believe that Europe is one country. It most certainly is not. As I explained in my speech on the Loyal Address last year, I have a home in Europe and many friends tell me of their worries and problems. Listening to their concerns, I realise that Europe is not one happy family but a group of countries, each with its own aspirations and determined to get the best possible deal for itself. Our future lies within that concept of what General de Gaulle described as "Europe des patries".

Later in the Gracious Speech I note a reference to the Maastricht treaty and I recognise how careful we must be in our approach to that legislation. Many people in Europe are nervous about the Maastricht treaty. People in France, Germany and elsewhere are far from satisfied that we should proceed in that way. After all, we talk about the convergence of economies. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, in a brilliant speech earlier, spoke of his hopes for the widening of the Community and the new countries that might join by the turn of the century. But if we are to have that convergence of economies hinted at in the Maastricht treaty, we must be frank and admit that substantial amounts of money will have to be paid by the richer countries to the poorer countries in Europe to bring about that convergence.

The people of this country have still not fully understood what that real convergence could mean and the price that would have to be paid. Without that convergence, the concept of a single currency is meaningless. I do not believe that that convergence is possible and, therefore, I do not believe that the single currency will follow. The single currency would not be in the best interests of the people of Europe.

Of course, I understand the argument advanced that it would be convenient for business people to be able to move around within the Community without having to change their money from one currency to another. That is a matter of great importance, and I believe that the British Government's concept of the hard ecu is better than the notion of a single currency operated from a single, central bank somewhere in Europe, which removes this country's ability to manage its own affairs. People used to laugh at the words, "loss of sovereignty", but if we cannot issue our own money, we have no control over our destiny. I cannot believe that it is right to adopt that approach without seriously considering what we are doing.

I listened to the right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) and was as confused by him today as I was during our last debate on the Gracious Speech. He talked about joining the 2·5 per cent. band of the exchange rate mechanism in one breath and of reducing interest rates in the next. Does he not realise that the straitjacket of the 2·5 per cent. band would have made even the modest reduction in interest rates announced by the Chancellor yesterday almost impossible? We need the freedom of the 6 per cent. band if we are to be able to take the actions necessary to bring this country and others in the Community out of international recession. While we may be devoting much time to Europe in the next 16 to 18 months, there is no doubt that we need to proceed with great caution.

The Gracious Speech also stated:

"Legislation will be presented to facilitate the work of the Parliamentary Boundary Commissions."

No one could be more anxious than me for a swift conclusion to the commissioners' suggestions based on commonsense solutions. But I shall mention a matter affecting my district. Part of my constituency includes the perambulation of the Crown lands of the New Forest. It is perhaps appropriate to mention that today, the day on which Her Majesty read her speech from the Throne.

Those Crown lands are what most people would call the New Forest. They have always been retained in one constituency, as that gives the Member of Parliament for that constituency—of whichever party—the opportunity to argue and negotiate with Ministers about the help required to protect that unique national heritage.

In 1983 the parliamentary commissioners reconsidered the demography of the district and, as a result, decided to make alterations to the constituency boundary affecting that perambulation. As a result of evidence that I gave to a local inquiry, the commissioners' report, Cmnd Paper 8797-1 of February 1983, concluded:

"The assistant Commissioner accepted that the whole of the historic area of the New Forest should be within one constituency."

On 6 February 1992 the boundary commissioners published proposals for the parliamentary constituency boundaries in Berkshire, Hampshire and the Isle of Wight. In those more recent proposals—to which the passage in the Gracious Speech refers—they go back on their word and divide the perambulation into two seats.

I have nothing against the concept of two constituencies in that part of Hampshire, based largely on population. However, it is ironic that the Isle of Wight, which has 101,000 electors, is not being touched—I shall put that matter to one side. But if we are to facilitate the boundary commissioners' actions, we must hope that the legislation contains a clause to ensure that the commissioners stick to the guidelines to which they agreed in 1983 and which were based on community interest, rather than divide a region of such national and international importance between two parts of the parliamentary system.

My right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food is coming to the New Forest on Monday to participate in the opening of a new committee designed to help protect the district—the New Forest committee—which will ultimately have statutory powers. Its headquarters will be in Lyndhurst which is regarded as the capital of the forest but, if the proposals are accepted, the rest of the Crown lands would come under another constituency.

The Gracious Speech has set out an exciting programme for this Session of Parliament. Many matters to which we shall return are part of the heritage that this Government have inherited from their predecessors. For the past 13 years we have mapped out a road for Britain —rolling back the frontiers of state monopoly and control, and giving freedom to our citizens. The result of the general election is clear in that it shows that the people of this country broadly suppport those objectives. I warmly welcome the Gracious Speech.

5.7 pm

Mr. Roy Hughes (Newport, East): May I first congratulate you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on your appointment to high office. I am sure that in the years ahead you will play a full part in ensuring fair and effective debates in the House.

It is always a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for New Forest (Sir P. McNair-Wilson). I share his reservations about the Maastricht treaty, but I do not intend to expand on his observations today.

The Gracious Speech contains a number of items with which I agree, such as the measure relating to terrorism and drugs. However, there are quite a number of items which I would rather had been left out. I particularly resent the further attack on the trade union movement contained on page 3, where it states:

"A Bill will be introduced to improve further the law on industrial relations."

That is a further attempt to weaken organised labour in this country.

The second item on page 3 states that the coal industry is to be privatised. The Conservative party won the general election and some might say that it is perhaps to be expected that the Conservative Government will turn the heat on their traditional enemy—the miner. The immediate post-war Attlee Government nationalised coal mines in 1947. Owing to the failure of previous coal owners to invest in the industry, that measure was long overdue. It was intended to bring harmony where bitterness and long-standing grievances prevailed, and was not without success. There was much modernisation of the industry, greater efficiency, and, until recent years, better industrial relations.

I am sure that privatisation will result in many pit closures and thousands of job losses. As the Rothschild report and others made clear, the industry in south Wales is already just about wiped out. It was not so long ago that we had pits in abundance in south Wales.

The mining valleys of south Wales have long provided a great sense of community, but mining is a hazardous and arduous occupation and there are many who will not regret its passing. Nevertheless, the Government are being short-sighted. Coal is a vital part of our indigenous resources. Admittedly, the seams may now be a little more difficult to work, but we have hundreds of years of supply under our feet. As an industrial nation we need large supplies of energy, and to rely increasingly on imports is not very wise. The price of those imports will invariably rise and eventually we could be held to ransom. The increased financial burden will have a grievous effect on our already worrying balance of payments.

North sea oil is in decline. From experience we know that imports of oil from the middle east can be problematic, not to mention the associated massive price variations. Nuclear energy, as a source of fuel for civilian purposes, has proved a disaster financially and is highly questionable from an environment point of view.

Over the years, despite the many pit closures and the general rundown of the industry, the old coal owners continued to extract their pound of flesh in compensation payments, which certainly had a gravely detrimental effect on the finances of the old national coal board. Ironically, under the Government's new plans, it will inevitably be the taxpayer who will bear the brunt of the burden of the future rundown of the industry. I refer to historical liabilities for subsidence, pit closure costs, concessionary coal for retired miners and their dependants, and pension payments. The Government's plans are misguided and short-sighted, and they should think again.

As for economic policy as set out in the Queen's Speech, I must point out that Britain has legions of unemployed people. Month after month the total increases. Like a tap left running, unemployment is waste. The cost in financial terms is tragic enough, but the social and human costs are of even greater consequence. Unemployment plays its part in the ever-escalating divorce rates, in child abuse and child neglect, in wife battering and even in death rates, which have been proved to be directly related to unemployment in certain areas.

Any person or organisation suggesting that the mounting crime rate has little to do with unemployment needs to think again. The return of full employment should be a principal objective of every major political party. It is no longer the down and outs who are the unemployed, or the unskilled labourers. People of all classes are becoming increasingly subject to the fear of unemployment and the personal and family problems that it unleashes.

The economist Keynes is back in vogue: we need to stimulate demand and to build up our industrial capacity to meet that demand.

The EC surely has a vested interest in drastically reducing unemployment. Our chronic balance of payments deficit shows that the exchange rate is out of line. Other countries seem to be in the same boat as ourselves vis-a-vis Germany. If the problem is not tackled, social tensions could arise throughout Europe. Extremism will come to the fore as it did in the 1930s, and the recent events in Los Angeles and other American cities give grave cause for concern.

If we do not realise the folly of present policies, the tragedy waiting to happen will be on our very doorstep. The Prime Minister has given us his text—a nation at ease with itself. How can it be, given mass unemployment? It is a contradiction in terms. The proposals in the Gracious Speech will certainly not solve this great problem.

The Gracious Speech does not mention the reorganisation of local government in Wales. Perhaps that is included in

"Other measures will be laid before you";

but there is a good deal of anxiety in Wales about this matter. The reform of local government in Wales has quite a history. In the late 1960s the Labour party had a good plan for reorganisation. It was based largely on the two-tier principle, but with an amalgamation of many of the smaller urban and rural authorities. The counties would have remained. At the same time, the plans realised the benefits of unitary authorities, and Cardiff, Swansea and Newport would have retained county borough status.

Unfortunately, the plan did not see the light of day in parliamentary legislation. The then Secretary of State for Wales, now Viscount Tonypandy, was prevailed upon by his Cabinet colleagues to wait for the Redcliffe-Maud report, which was in the process of deliberation. In the event, it was the Redcliffe-Maud recommendations that were largely implemented by the incoming Conservative Government of 1970—not only in Wales but in the rest of the country. The cost was astronomic, and I venture to suggest that at the end of it all we had a worse form of local government than before.

Now it seems that the process is to be gone through again. This time the Secretary of State for Wales has said that the system will be based on unitary authorities. In Newport we welcome the proposal that the borough council will be the sole unit of local government, for that is what the people of the town desire. Newport has the resources to carry out the necessary functions. I pay tribute, however, to Gwent county council, which has been an excellent local authority. It is served by good officers and staff and its elected members are of a high calibre.

I want to draw two aspects of local government reorganisation to the attention of the House. First, the power of local government has been eroded by central Government. The Government came badly unstuck over the poll tax, but the diktat of the Treasury now predominates. For example, schools are being encouraged to opt out although the costs involved are much higher than for local authority schools. Many other local government services are being handed over to private enterprise and a deterioration in services seems to be the hallmark of that development. The whole thrust of the Government's approach is detrimental to the interests of the people that local government serves. It undermines the whole principle of local democracy in Britain, which was once admired the world over.

I regret the absence from the Gracious Speech of any plan to create an elected assembly in Wales. With unitary authorities, some of them fairly small, the need for such an assembly is ever more pressing. What is happening in Wales is little short of colonial rule with the Secretary of State for Wales, who represents a Cheshire constituency, playing the part of Governor-General. Quangos proliferate and more seem to be in the pipeline. Their members are appointed by the Secretary of State and are responsible only to him. Wales needs a healthy dose of democracy, which an elected assembly would provide. I hope that during the Government's term of office the people of Wales will come to appreciate the need for an elected assembly to fill a vacuum that has existed for too long.

5.21 pm

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): I congratulate you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on your appointment to your high office. I am sure that you will order the business of the House in the best interests of every Member and that Back Benchers especially will have your protection. I think that we entered the House about the same time and have served for many years, although I have more grey hairs than you.

The penultimate paragraph of the Gracious Speech states:

"In Northern Ireland, my Government will continue their efforts to eliminate terrorism through resolute enforcement of the law, combined with progressive economic, social and political policies. They will promote the re-establishment of stable institutions of government within a framework of positive relations with the Republic of Ireland."

I welcome that statement in the speech from the Throne and the fact that the Prime Minister has confirmed the Government's intention to be resolute in the elimination of terrorism. The House will be aware that there is a new Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. When he arrived in our Province he said:

"Terrorism will be defeated. We cannot tell when but the time will come when this evil will be ejected from our midst —pray God never to return . . . The entire Government from Prime Minister downwards is committed first and foremost to the defeat and elimination of terrorism from whichever quarter from within the community it may come."

Those are strong words and they are welcomed by the entire right-thinking community in Northern Ireland, but to give them validity there must be definite action. The spiral of appalling killings in the Province at the moment becomes more and more horrendous as 1992 advances. That demonstrates that the security policies of successive Governments have not succeeded.

Already this year 47 people have been killed. We are not yet half way through the year but that figure represents more than half the total number of people killed in the Province last year. Since the current violence began in 1969, 2,999 people have died in Ulster. Those are sobering figures. Last year, 86 people were killed. Not content with the bombing of military targets and police stations, the terrorists have gruesomely demonstrated their desire to murder civilians and security personnel to bring about their hideous objectives. There have been horrendous killings of innocent mothers and children and of people going about their normal business. Such a sad and terrible litany of killing and mayhem shows that the Government must put their resolution into action, and such action must be shown to be eliminating terrorism.

I look forward to a change in some of the security policies that have so evidently failed. The supply of oxygen must be taken from the terrorists so that at long last it will be made clear to them that men of violence have no place in our society and cannot achieve their goals. I remind the House that the Government submitted to those men of violence when they signed the Anglo-Irish Agreement. Concessions as a consequence of violence encourage greater violence. Sadly, we in Northern Ireland have reaped the whirlwind of the Government's concessions to violence.

As the House may know, talks about the future governance of the Province have recommenced. I am sure that the House wishes those who take part in the talks well. They will not be easy because there are many problems and difficulties. At the last meeting of the Anglo-Irish Conference on 27 April, the new Secretary of State for Northern Ireland said that Her Majesty's Government would

"rise from the table still reaffirming that Northern Ireland would remain part of the United Kingdom as long as the majority living there wished it."

I welcome today's statement by the Prime Minister that he is prepared to defend the union of Scotland, Wales, England and Northern Ireland. As that statement is implemented, it will go a long way towards showing the terrorists that they will not win. Two years ago the previous Secretary of State for Northern Ireland said:

"Although the constitutional question has often seemed central to matters in Northern Ireland, I turn to it now in the hope of putting it to one side. We regard the position as clear. Northern Ireland is part of the United Kingdom in national and international law. It is part of the United Kingdom because that is the clear wish of the majority of people of Northern Ireland. There will be no change in the status of Northern Ireland unless or until the majority of people there want it. That seems unlikely for the foreseeable future. I believe that most people in this House, and I number myself among them, would wish to see the Union continue, but the principles of democracy and self-determination mean that the people of Northern Ireland must themselves be the final arbiters.

By virtue of its constitution the Republic of Ireland has since 1937 also claimed sovereignty over Northern Ireland. We do not accept or recognise that claim, which has no basis in our law or, equally important, in international law. That claim is, I know, seen by some in Northern Ireland, and in

[Rev. Ian Paisley]

other parts of this country, as a major stumbling block to the development of constructive relationships. I do not regard it as helpful."—[*Official Report*, 5 July 1990; Vol. 175, c. 1140.] I welcome that statement, and its reaffirmation by the new Secretary of State.

The House should be aware that when the talks were called an agenda was drawn up and agreed to by all the parties. The House will be aware also that there are three strands to the talks. The first strand is the constitutional politicians of Northern Ireland, the parties that they represent and the United Kingdom Government. The second strand is the constitutional representatives of Northern Ireland, Her Majesty's Government and the Government of the Republic of Ireland. It is to deal with the implications of the Anglo-Irish Agreement in regard to the relationship between Northern Ireland and the Republic and the attempt that underlies the talks to get a new agreement to replace the former one.

I regret that southern Ireland has publicly acted in bad faith. On 27 April, after the most recent meeting of the Anglo-Irish Conference, Mr. Andrews, the Foreign Minister of the Irish Republic, had this to say about the talks:

"We come with our agenda, they come with their agenda and we discuss both agendas".

Yet all the parties to the talks had the agendas put before them and were asked to say yea or nay. Why does the Irish Republic want the change? Mr. Andrews said that the legal basis of Northern Ireland's constitutional position within the United Kingdom was the Government of Ireland Act 1920. He said that that Act must be put upon the table, as it were, and that it must be negotiable. He asserted that it was on a par with the claim that is set out in articles 2 and 3 of the Irish Republic's constitution that the Republic has jurisdiction over Northern Ireland as part of Her Majesty's kingdom.

As a representative of the people of Northern Ireland in the House, I wish to make it clear that the Government of Ireland Act is a legal Act under which Northern Ireland stands as part of the United Kingdom. It makes no claim against anybody's territory. It states simply that the six north-eastern counties of Ireland remain part of the United Kingdom. However, the Foreign Minister of the Irish Republic tells us that the Act is on a par with an illegal claim—not only is it illegal, it is immoral and criminal. Whenever an IRA man takes a gun and shoots a police officer, a soldier or a civilian he justifies that act by saying that he is trying to achieve the objective that is set out in the constitution.

The former Secretary of State said that the talks would take place

"without the dilution of United Kingdom sovereignty on the status of Northern Ireland as part of the United Kingdom."

The hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume) said:

"the harsh reality is that whether or not Unionists have the academic right to a veto on Irish unity, they have it as a matter of fact based on numbers, geography and history and they have it in the exact same way as Greek or Turkish Cypriots have a factual veto on the exercise of self-determination on the island of Cyprus."

Yet the Foreign Minister of the Irish Republic, at this late stage, is prepared to impose another agenda, not agreed. I am glad that the Prime Minister said today that the Union is not negotiable. My hon. Friends and I, my colleague the leader of the Ulster Unionist party, the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux), and other Northern Ireland Members on the Opposition Benches will not be at any table to negotiate the Union. That is a matter for the people of Northern Ireland, and only for them. They spoke once again in the general election, and they spoke rightly. The House should examine the voting figures in Northern Ireland. The people of Northern Ireland voted for Unionist candidates in a way that straddled the religious divide. Roman Catholics vote for the Union as well as do Protestants. That should be put firmly to the House.

I have taken the opportunity to put grave matters before the House so that hon. Members will be aware of the difficulties that we face in Northern Ireland. Nevertheless, Members of both Unionist parties are determined to do their best at the talks, within the agenda that is agreed, to help to bring stable government to Northern Ireland, a fair and stable form of government which means that everyone who wants to live in peace and to exercise his civil and religious beliefs will find the fullest opportunity to do so. It is to that goal that we are dedicated.

I am concerned with two other matters that appear in the Queen's Speech. First, there is the proposed lottery Bill. My view about a national lottery is well known. I do not think that any Government should say that they cannot finance what needs to be financed without the turn of the wheel of fortune. I do not believe in that. I believe that the Government have a responsibility to find a way properly to finance the causes that need to be financed. I have made my position clear in the House before.

As for the Maastricht treaty, I was rather amused when the leader of the Liberal party said that we must all conforms to a single system of election in Europe. None of the European countries conforms to a single election system. For instance, I am elected to Strasbourg on the basis of a different system from that on which I am elected to the House. I am elected on the basis of STV. That stands not for Scottish television, but for "single transferable vote". People say that that is not a fair system; they say that there should be a list system, or a combination of constituency and list systems. Europe has not perfected its system. When it has produced the perfect system, then it will be time for us to follow the same route.

My views on Europe are also well known. I am greatly disturbed by what is proposed. I heard someone say in the House that the European Parliament should have greater authority, but the European Parliament is not like this Parliament. In that Parliament, we have no Executive, and no Government responsible to that Parliament. We have Mr. Delors, who thinks that he is the new Napoleon and that he will rule Europe by diktat.

Those of us who have sat in the Strasbourg Parliament —and I have sat there for 12 years—know that the system there is altogether different. There, we have no Government; we have no authority. All legislation in Europe emanates from the chosen few in the Commission. I see that Mr. Delors now wants to destroy the Council of Ministers as well. He will put his hand to anything to get his way. It is time for the House to say to Europe, "Set your house in order."

It would be a strange irony, would it not, if a referendum in the Irish Republic brought down the Maastricht treaty? If that happens, as it may well do, where will Maastricht be? It will be buried in a Sadducee's grave, from which there will be no resurrection.

5.42 pm

Mr. Michael Clapham (Barnsley, West and Penistone): Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to make my maiden speech so early in the debate on the Gracious Speech. Let me take the opportunity also to congratulate you on your election.

First, I pay tribute to my predecessor, Mr. Allen McKay, who has retired after 14 years in the House. He was first elected in 1978 as the Member for Penistone, and from 1983 onwards represented Barnsley, West and Penistone. During his time in the House, Allen was a tireless fighter for his constituents. He set a high standard of representation, a standard that I intend to continue. He is well respected in the constituency, and by his former colleagues in the House. I am sure, therefore, that the House will want to wish him and his wife a long and happy retirement.

In view of the contents of the Gracious Speech, I now wish to deal with the problems that face many of my constituents. Since the early 1980s, my constituency has witnessed the closure of five collieries and two major workshops. The knock-on effect on the local engineering industry and on small business generally has been devastating. With little in the way of industrial diversification in the three Barnsley constituencies, we have lost about 20,000 pit jobs over the past decade. That does not take into account the multiplier effect on other industries. In the circumstances, the local authority has done well to hold the community together and to start to attract new industry to the town, but more needs to be done. The authority's efforts over the past few years have been set back greatly by the poll tax and the reduced grant allocation, and we now learn from the Gracious Speech that the Government are to privatise the deep coal mining industry. That is a retrograde step for mining communities, and for miners and their families.

Britain's mines were transformed by the credit of state backing after being rescued from neglect and brought into public ownership in 1947. Since the "Plan for Coal" in 1974, more than £12 billion has been invested in the mining industry. The industry went through a second technological revolution in the 1980s, and the miners have increased productivity from 2·4 tonnes per man shift in the early 1980s to an astounding 6·14 tonnes. That, by any measure, is an enormous increase.

That astounding record has been achieved through a combination of investment, skill and hard work. Now, the miners are to be rewarded bitterly for their pains, and private owners will gain the benefit of the enormous investment in the deep coal mining industry.

The recently published Rothschild report on the commercial viability of a privatised coal industry suggested that only a dozen or so pits would survive privatisation. That forecast, however, may well be optimistic. Some experts now predict that British Coal's next contract with the generators may leave room for only five or six pits. If that happens—as seems likely—Britain will become dependent on imported coal; it will increase its balance of payments commitment by roughly £3 billion per annum; we shall face increased energy insecurity; there will be an expansion of opencast mining; and we shall witness a vigorous "dash for gas". That is not good for Britain. Moreover, privatisation will, in my view, threaten good mining practice and health and safety standards. We need only look at the trend in the 160 or so private pits which already operate in Britain to see that that contention is supported.

Another point in the Gracious Speech gives me cause for concern, because it further threatens industrial democracy. I refer to the proposal for more industrial relations legislation—a euphemism for a further shackling of the trade unions. Over the past 13 years, there have been seven major pieces of such legislation. The trade unions have become the most tightly regulated voluntary bodies in British society. The record of the trade unions in Britain shows that they have done more than any other institution to improve the quality of life of working people. More legislation to restrict their activities will encourage unscrupulous employers to fragment the work force and push down pay and conditions. That will undermine attempts to establish Britain's competitive position as a producer of high quality goods.

I feel sure that the agricultural sector in my constituency will welcome the reference in the Gracious Speech to the proposed introduction of legislation to promote improvements in agricultural marketing.

It was with great disappointment that I noted no mention in the Gracious Speech of the Government's intention, in keeping with the recommendation of the Select Committee, to introduce legislation to guarantee a pension to the pensioners robbed by Robert Maxwell. In addition to the guarantee for the Maxwell pensioners, all pensioners need legislation to protect them. The fact that the trust law is insufficient has been shown clearly. It is a serious omission and one that I hope that the Government will look at closely with a view to introducing such legislation. I know, from looking at the Gracious Speech, that many of my constituents will be severely disappointed.

5.51 pm

Mr. David Madel (Bedfordshire, South-West): Before congratulating the hon. Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. Clapham) on his maiden speech, I wish to congratulate you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on assuming your new office as Deputy Speaker. I know that you were born and schooled in Bedfordshire and the entire county will be delighted. The Gracious Speech said that we will get a move on with changing the parliamentary boundaries. It could be that the county may be entitled to a sixth parliamentary seat. I am not saying that you will necessarily cross over from Northamptonshire, but one never knows how these matters will work out. I am sure that I speak for many in Bedfordshire when I congratulate you on your assumption to the Deputy Speakership.

It gives me great pleasure to congratulate the hon. Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone on his maiden speech. The House greatly appreciated his tribute to Allen McKay and all that he did in the House, particularly the way in which he argued for the coal industry. We listened with great interest to the hon. Gentleman's comments on the coal industry. Speeches on the industy always strike a deep chord in the House and we look forward to hearing from the hon. Gentleman as the legislation on the future of the coal industry proceeds.

I noted with interest the hon. Gentleman's comments on the Government's plans for further reform of industrial relations. He said that the matter needed to be looked at carefully and I agree with him. There is an increasing

[Mr. David Madel]

management response to the legislation and we shall have to wait and see how it works out. As I have said, the hon. Gentleman's comments about industrial relations and the coal industry were appreciated by the House and we look forward to further contributions from him.

I welcome the tone of the Gracious Speech and the policy themes set out in it. I welcome the commitment to improving public services through the citizens charter and the commitment to raise standards at all levels of education. I especially welcome the part of the speech which says that the

"Government are committed to increasing the role of the railways in meeting the country's transport needs."

I am delighted that my hon. Friend the Member for Kettering (Mr. Freeman)—I believe that he is a neighbour of yours, Mr. Deputy Speaker—has been reconfirmed in his ministerial duties with responsibility for public transport and the railways. He will know of my interest in reopening the Dunstable to Luton line for passenger traffic. It is nice to know from the Gracious Speech that the role of the railways is to be given increasing importance in meeting the country's transport needs. Following from that is the commitment to introduce legislation to allow private sector money to become involved in running our railways. Anything that improves the quality of public services is to be welcomed and the Gracious Speech strikes the right chord there.

I wish to raise a matter of immediate concern to my constituents—it was touched on by the hon. Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone—and that is the future of the Maxwell pension fund. Mr. Maxwell owned Waterlowes printing plant in Dunstable and Sun printers in Watford. As a result, in my constituency there are a number of ex-employees and widows who are dependent on a Maxwell pension. Many have given a lifetime of skilled service to the printing industry. Some have been told that their pensions might not be paid after the end of May. That is causing immense anxiety and distress. I understand that there is to be a lobby of Parliament in early June and I hope that by then we may have heard about the Government's thinking on how to handle this distressing matter. If the present situation is not enough to worry about, some of my constituents have just received a note, with no explanation, saying that their Maxwell pension is now being paid not by the Maxwell Communication Corporation but by the Mirror group.

This entire wretched saga is the unacceptable face of capitalism writ large in Bedfordshire. There has been a history of industrial co-operation in my constituency and so many of my constituents have given a lifetime of service to the printing industry. I hope that the Government will make an early statement about what can be done to help people who, in good faith, put so much of their incomes into pensions and are now facing great anxiety.

I welcome yesterday's interest rate cut as a further step towards getting us out of recession and difficulty. However, as the Government recognise, it will not stop unemployment from continuing to rise in the immediate future. That puts an increasing burden on the training and enterprise councils as the number seeking training is bound to rise. Just before the election, the Government made the welcome announcement of additional funds to finance the introduction of employment action and high technology national training. The Government pointed out that funding for this financial year will be greater than that for the financial year which ended on 31 March, but there are further problems. It is recognised now that if the number requiring training under the guarantees exceeds the contract levels, the position will be reviewed and the onus will not fall exclusively on training and enterprise councils. The Government recognise that TECs cannot be expected to enter into an open-ended guarantee for youth and adult training when their funds are finite. The Government have made the welcome statement that they will review the position. It needs to be reviewed now because, alas, the number of people seeking training has risen and will continue to rise until unemployment starts to fall.

The Conservative party and the Government made a welcome commitment in the manifesto by saying that popular schools which become over-subscribed will be given extra funds to allow them to expand. That is a generous and bold commitment as it implies that there will be Government funding for increased running costs and capital costs. I hope that the Treasury will smile happily at what is a considerable potential increase in state spending. If that leads to an acceleration in the number of schools opting out, will those opted—out schools be buying back from local education authorities the support services that the local education authorities now provide? I refer to curriculum back-up, peripatetic music teachers, curriculum support and outdoor activities. That is an important administrative and financial detail. As soon as the Government can say more about it, that will be welcomed, but the commitment to spend more where schools are meeting increased parental demand is thoroughly welcomed. I hope that there will be no hesitation or worry by the Treasury about meeting that valuable and welcome commitment in our education service.

I shall also mention the Government's plans for testing at seven, 11 and 14. I fully support testing at seven, but it has got off to an uneven start. However, it is essential as a first guide to a child's progress at school. Testing at 11 is not yet with us; we are told that it will be with us by 1994. Testing at 11 is a little different, because we now have —thank goodness—a welcome variety in the changing of the age at which children move on to middle and upper schools. Some children change at eight, some at nine and some at 11. Those who change at nine go to middle schools which cater for children up to the age of 13, where the curriculum is wider and greater opportunities are provided. Those who change at 11 go straight on to their upper school.

It will be difficult to get a clear picture of testing at 11 because so much depends on what sort of school a child is in. For children attending middle schools for the 9-13 age range, testing can be useful. Corrective action can be taken between the ages of 11 and 13, when the child will leave the school. However, if a child is moving on at 11 because the local education authority makes the change at 11, corrective action can hardly be taken in that school. It is asking quite something to tell the new upper school to start acting immediately on the basis of a test that a child took at the age of 11 in a previous school.

Diagnostic testing is useful and can be helpful, but we cannot imagine that it could be applied uniformly throughout the state education system, because of the different patterns involving the age at which pupils move

on to upper schools. The Government, rightly, want variety and greater choice in education, so that is a potential problem for them.

With regard to testing at 14, when a child reaches the age of 14 he or she is getting close to the GCSE exam. Rightly, the Government have invested much money and political capital in trying to make the GCSE exam system work properly. Although I am not opposed, just like that, to testing at 14, I do not want anything to interfere at that age with a child's progress towards the GCSE expectations. We do not want children to lose their confidence because of a test at 14, nor vital teacher time to be taken away from the essential preparation for GCSE, which is taken at 15 or 16. I do not oppose the concept in principle, but the Government will have to go into considerable detail, and exercise great caution, before moving ahead on testing at 11 and 14.

This is the second time since the war that a Conservative Government have been returned with a majority of about 20. My hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, Moorlands (Mr. Knox) mentioned what the then Prime Minister—Mr. Churchill, as he then was—said about that during the debate on the Loyal Address on 6 November 1951. My hon. Friend quoted one part of Mr. Churchill's speech; I shall quote another, which is relevant to this Parliament:

> "What the House needs is a period of tolerant and constructive debating on the merits of the questions before us without nearly every speech on either side being distorted by the passions of one election or the preparations for another." —[*Official Report*, 6 November 1951; Vol. 493, c. 68-69.]

I believe that the 1951 Parliament took that advice to heart, and proceeded in a constructive and orderly way. I hope that this Parliament will do the same, 41 years later.

6.3 pm

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): It falls to me, too, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to congratulate you and your two colleagues on your election today. We wish you well. I trust that, unlike your predecessor, you will not have the duty of showing me the red card on occasions—although no doubt I deserved that when it happened. I shall take care not to transgress.

I also congratulate the hon. Members for Sheffield, Attercliffe (Mr. Betts) and for Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. Clapham) who have made their maiden speeches today. They will feel better having got those speeches off their plates. I am sure that what they said struck a note with all hon. Members on both sides of the House.

I shall refer to some of the details of the Queen's Speech before moving on to the general political setting in which we in Plaid Cymru feel that they should be viewed. We heard the Queen's Speech of a Government who were tired before the election, and are even more tired after the election. They should now be recharging their batteries in opposition, but as they have come back into government, there are not many signs of new thinking in the Queen's Speech.

Some of the detailed proposals will cause worry. Given our memories of years gone by, it would be surprising if the proposal to privatise the coal industry did not cause worry for us in Wales.

The railway system in Wales appears to be being pared down, especially the services between London and Holyhead, as what appears to be a preparation for privatisation. We are worried about those proposals, too.

The Queen's Speech refers to standards of education, but those standards will not be improved unless substantially more resources are provided. We are aware of the Government's tight financial position, and unless they are willing to raise taxes, they will not be able to put the necessary resources into education.

We are concerned, too, about the work of the Parliamentary Boundary Commissions. If that is to give the Conservatives 20 or 30 more seats, do we face the possibility of perpetual Conservative Governments, against the will of the people in Wales and Scotland—and, indeed, much to the dismay of people in many parts of England.

The proposal for a national lottery causes us some worry, too. Many of my friends in the voluntary sector, such as those involved in disability politics, are worried about the possible loss of income if a national lottery is introduced.

We now have a heritage Minister, but it is far from clear how a Minister for the so-called national heritage, in a United Kingdom context, will interact with the Secretaries of State for Wales and for Scotland who have specific responsibilities for those two countries.

The Queen's Speech refers to community care. In less than 12 months' time the full implications of community care will be with us, and a considerable amount needs to be clarified to enable local authorities and health authorities to live with those implications. We hope that more will become clear in the next few days and weeks. Action is needed.

There is lip service to the environment, too, but our worry is that it is only lip service. Clearly, a drastic shift in approach is needed if the environmental tragedy facing not only Britain and Europe but the rest of the world is to be averted. The Government must go to Rio with a positive plan, a commitment and a willingness to co-operate with the countries that have been thinking, worrying and acting to try to meet the challenges.

We would all welcome changes to the leasehold system to help leaseholders, but that appears to be almost the only reference to housing, although housing in Wales, and in many inner cities, is in considerable crisis. This Parliament should give much greater attention to housing, and we should start this year.

Of course, we welcome the reference to a new Welsh language Act, but we shall not comment on that until we know its contents. It could represent a significant milestone, or it could mean nothing. We shall seek, at the very least, for the proposals of the Welsh Language Board to be the basis of such an Act. In particular, we shall see whether there will be a right for people who so wish to have education through the medium of the Welsh language available within a reasonable distance of their homes.

In an all-Wales context, there is as much missing from the Queen's Speech as is contained in it. In particular, it had been expected that there would be legislation on local government in Wales—the hon. Member for Newport, East (Mr. Hughes) mentioned that a few moments ago. Only last week the Secretary of State for Wales gave an assurance that the new structure of local government in

[Mr. Dafydd Wigley]

Wales would be operational by 1994. If no legislation is mentioned in the Queen's Speech, that is impossible. The Government should spell out their thinking.

If the Government intend to go back to the drawing board, to examine the implications of their proposals and to take on board some of the criticisms of the counties and the districts, if they have seen the need to consider the government of Wales in terms not only of local government but of creating democracy at the all-Wales level, securing control over the numerous quangos that run our everyday lives, and making the Welsh Office answerable, we welcome the delay. But local government needs to know where it stands because not only the future of the services but the prospects for the employees in local government are at stake. The Government need to spell out exactly what their timetable is and what their intentions are.

Aspects of employment are missing from the Queen's Speech. It is difficult to see how the Queen's Speech could have been put together without addressing the central question of unemployment which is such a cancer in so many of our communities, not least in the old industrial areas of Wales, in the old slate-quarrying areas of north-west Wales, in south-west Wales and in the industrial valleys of Glamorgan and Gwent.

The Maastricht content of the Queen's Speech will be the subject of considerable discussion. There is a need to ensure that we in the countries of Britain develop systems that mesh into the models being developed in continental Europe and that the principle of subsidiarity is applied in relation not only to the United Kingdom vis-a-vis Europe, but to the position of Wales, of Scotland, of Northern Ireland and, no doubt, of the regions of England with regard to Britain as a unit.

A central question still has not been answered. We expect clarification from the Secretary of State for Wales about who will represent Wales on the committee of the regions which stems from the Maastricht agreement. The right hon. Gentleman has denied this week that he will be the representative there. One can understand that he may not feel that he has the legitimacy to be there. He did not face the Welsh electorate at the general election, he does not represent a Welsh constituency, and he has no mandate to speak for Wales. If he has now accepted that, and if he will, as an interim step, allow representatives of the Welsh district and county councils to represent Wales on the committee of the regions until we have an elected all-Wales body, at least a shred of daylight is coming into the deliberations.

I come to the central question in our approach to the Queen's Speech and to this Parliament—the question of democracy in our country and of mandates to rule. It was interesting to listen to the Prime Minister's comments earlier this afternoon. He quoted George Bernard Shaw when he said

"'all great truths begin as blasphemies'".

It seems to be blasphemy here to talk of changing the relationship and the nature of the relationship between the countries of these islands. Yet until we get a change in that relationship, we shall not get the system of government which gives real democracy to Wales, to Scotland and to the people of Northern Ireland.

It is interesting to note that the Government are apparently willing to talk now about creating an elected assembly or executive in Northern Ireland as one of the possibilities while denying that possibility to the people of Scotland and to the people of Wales who, in the recent election, overwhelmingly showed their support at the ballot box for parties that advocate a move in that direction.

The Prime Minister spoke this afternoon about the need to adapt to the democratic views of the citizens across Europe. There is also a need to adapt to the democratic views of the citizens in the countries of the United Kingdom. In constructing a consensus, to which the Prime Minister referred, there is a need to ensure that consensus exists in Wales and in Scotland on the future government of our country. There is a need for change.

The Government do not have a mandate to rule in Wales. They have only 30 per cent. of the vote in Wales. In the 1987 general election, the Conservatives had eight seats in Wales; after the recent election, they have six seats in Wales. Plaid Cymru has four seats. We accept that we do not have a mandate to govern, but the Conservative party certainly has not either. The Liberal Democrat party has one seat, and Labour has 27. Clearly, what the people of Wales want in terms of government has come out of the general election. I wish that there had been 27 Plaid Cymru seats, but that was not the case. Clearly, the election was not a mandate for the Government. They do not have a mandate and they should not rule our country. They should not put policies to Wales which have been rejected by the Welsh people through the ballot box.

The election was good for Plaid Cymru. We gained a fourth seat, we almost gained a fifth, and we increased our vote by more than 20 per cent.

I pay tribute to some of the former Welsh Members who are not with us in this new Parliament. My colleague Dafydd Elis Thomas was Member of Parliament for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy for 18 years until the election. The loss of Michael Foot will be felt by hon. Members of all parties. There were Keith Raffan, who became a bit of a rebel in his own party, and Sir Anthony Meyer, who caused quite a bit of controversy and who painted his own picture of the Welsh scene.

We also note that Ian Grist is not with us. Although the political implications of that may inspire mixed feelings, he certainly made a considerable contribution as an individual. We no longer have here Geraint Howells, whose seat we gained. We had considerable respect for his contribution to the House as an individual. We no longer have Richard Livsey who served Brecon and Radnor with such distinction while he was here. The losses of John P. Smith and Huw Edwards will be felt heavily in Wales because they were already making considerable contributions. Our party welcomes our hon. Friends the new Members for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Dafis), who is a Member of Parliament with the support of the Green party, and for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Mr. Llwyd).

Some 70 per cent. of the electorate in Wales voted for parties that wanted some sort of elected Welsh democracy. They wanted policies that met their social values, the economic circumstances of Wales, and the needs of the communities as reflected in the election. The democratic process in Wales appears not to allow the people of Wales to get the sort of government for which they voted.

The hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) referred to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland saying that the people of Northern Ireland must be the

final arbiters. Given the stark contrast between the election results in Wales and Scotland and the overall election result in Britain, there must be some way in which the people of Wales and the people of Scotland can also be the final arbiters on what we need in our country.

Given that in recent years the Prime Minister—I am glad to see him on the Front Bench now—and other Ministers have referred to the 1979 referendum, the time has come for us again to have a referendum—for the people of Wales and the people of Scotland to have a multi-optional referendum in which the options, including the status quo, would be put and in which the Government would let the people decide. If the Prime Minister and the Government believe in democracy, that is surely something that the Prime Minister must be willing to facilitate. If we are to move forward to a new relationship—a happy relationship—within these islands, it must reflect that diversity of aspiration within these islands. If our systems cannot adjust to that, something is seriously wrong. Until that adjustment takes place, we in Wales will not get the sort of government for which we voted and which we need.

6.17 pm

Mr. David Martin (Portsmouth, South): At the beginning of the first Session of a new Parliament, there is an inescapable air of renewal. There is renewal in the occupancy of your chair, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I congratulate you sincerely on your appointment to it. There is renewal of the representation of so many seats, and we have already heard some good maiden speeches today. There is renewal of some of the legislative casualties or consequences of the previous Parliament, there is renewal of energy and ideas, and there is renewal of hope for the future.

After 13 years, the Government have been granted another glad, confident morning. The challenge will be to ensure that that gladness and confidence are carried through to evening and then, after 17 or 18 years, through to a new dawn beyond that.

We have heard a Queen's Speech in which part of the manifesto on which we fought the general election has been set out for legislative attention. I add my own personal manifesto for this Parliament for the benefit of the people of Portsmouth whom I represent.

First and above all, the revival of the economy is the most crucial ingredient for jobs and prosperity for the maximum number of people. Profitable businesses create jobs and in the south, nowhere more than in Portsmouth, the recession has been felt hard, combined as it has been with large increases under the uniform business rate system. Welcome as was the freezing of the increase for this year, I urge my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer to consider it again for his 1993 Budget, depending on how economic prospects for businesses, especially genuinely small businesses, have improved in the meantime. In addition, a genuine resolution to screw inflation down to zero and to keep it there must be maintained this time. In this Parliament, let the Government bring back to this country the inestimable benefits of sound money, stable prices and confidence in the value of savings and investment. Such a policy will bring in its wake lower interest rates, which, combined with lower taxation, will bring to Portsmouth, as to the whole country, the expansion in jobs that is required to lick too-high unemployment and secure increases in living standards beyond those achieved in the heyday of the 1980s.

Included in that increase in living standards, I should like to see more pensioners. One of the strongest messages that we met on the doorsteps where the fight was hottest during the general election campaign—and Portsmouth was one of those places—came from pensioners with small occupational pensions in addition to their state pensions or with a modest amount of capital, who made certain remarks about Government policy. They do not readily recognise the justice of the welfare state as they compare their position with the position of pensioners who qualify for income support and all the attendant extra benefits that that eligibility unlocks. They do not see that it was worth all their savings and effort, and they frequently ask me, "Why did we do it? We can see no benefits at this stage in our lives." They cannot without reservation appreciate the advantage of owning their own home. The capital invested is unrealisable because they want to stay in their home for the rest of their lives, which is a reasonable ambition for most people, but that unrealisable capital value is held against them for the purposes of claiming benefit, even if they do not have sufficient income to carry out repairs and maintenance work.

The answer lies in a greyer area being devised at the margins, a much higher capital disregard and the creation of steps in and out of benefit rather than a sheer wall dividing those with benefit from those without, suddenly and all at once. This Parliament, and the Ministries involved, must address that as a matter of urgency. The taxation of small occupational pensions is also resented.

The Government must continue to lower income tax bands as well as income tax rates. Once the 25 per cent. band has gone in favour of a 20 per cent. band for all, let us aim for a 15 per cent. band. Let us also continue to raise thresholds. I look forward to millions more people—pensioners prominent among them—being taken out of tax altogether and to many more being taxed less than they are at present by the end of this Parliament.

I welcome the reference in the Gracious Speech to a Bill to extend choice and diversity in education. I want to see concentration on an improvement in primary education as well as education at the secondary stage. I also want to see increased opportunities for nursery schooling. What can be done in Wandsworth ought to be made possible in Portsmouth and elsewhere in the country.

In that connection, it is crucial that Portsmouth should be allowed to break free from the county structure of local government. Portsmouth should be given the opportunity in education, as in social services, planning and so much else, to enjoy unitary status and once more to run its own affairs, as it did before 1974. I urge the Government not to backslide in their commitment to restoring to cities such as Portsmouth the choice once more to govern themselves at local level. Expectations that they may be able to do so have been raised high, and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment and my hon. Friend the Minister of State for Local Government and Inner Cities need only come to Portsmouth—they are welcome to do so at any time—to know how warmly welcomed such a reform would be and how eagerly it is anticipated.

I want to make a few remarks about housing. Portsmouth will soon be a university city. The number of students attending the polytechnic has expanded by

[Mr. David Martin]

thousands in a very few years. Unfortunately, student accommodation on campus has not expanded to keep pace with that development: it should, and at prices that students can afford. The Government must address that question. It is one of the factors that illustrate the topsy-turvy nature of housing-for-rent policies over so many years. Some streets in Southsea and Portsmouth are now dominated by students occupying in multi-occupation what should be family housing. In the meantime, families are accommodated in digs.

I guarantee that that is the case in great polytechnic or university cities throughout the country. The reason is the operation of the rent Acts and the fact that local authorities and housing associations will never be able to provide enough homes in the public sector to make up for the poor operation of the private market. If private landlords were allowed to, and were given incentives, they would once more provide homes for families, and the topsy-turvey character of the housing market would be corrected. But with rent Act protection barely affected by the creation of shorthold tenancies—welcome though that development is—they never will, and the curse of the irrational distribution of homes will continue to cast a blight on so much Government achievement in other directions. We must address that matter urgently in this Parliament.

Mr. Michael Spicer (Worcestershire, South): My hon. Friend is on an important point, and, as a former housing Minister, I feel strongly about what he is saying. Whereas even five or 10 years ago 50 per cent. of housing was in the private rented sector, the figure is now down to about 5 or 6 per cent. Is not the central issue the landlord's return on investment—in addition to the protective or anti-protective measures to which my hon. Friend has referred?

Mr. Martin: Yes, and the return on investment must therefore be made better for those who let to families than for those who let to other members of society, particularly students. If we can get that right, we shall get the provision of shelter right, just as we have got the provision of clothing and food right. This is very much a matter for investment decision, but we could do more to help and the Government should certainly address the matter afresh.

I was pleased to see the commitment in the Queen's Speech to leasehold reform, which has long been sought by many of my constituents and pressed by me and by many of my colleagues, who will also welcome it. At last, we are addressing the problem, which has been with us for many years.

I also welcome the reference in the Gracious Speech to British Rail. The lines to Portsmouth and the rolling stock used on them are long overdue for improvement and are often commented upon by visitors and compared with those in other parts of the country. I want to see the same dedication concentrated on such improvements as has been brought to bear on road links, and I am pleased by the positive nature of what is said in the Queen's Speech. I look forward to the delivery of such improvements in the coming years.

Crucial decisions remain to be made by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence on naval matters that directly concern Portsmouth. Top of my list—it has always been top of my list—for resolution is the future of the Fleet Maintenance and Repair Organisation. Fleetlands across the water is now a self-managed defence support agency. It is that status that I have continually sought for the Fleet Maintenance Repair Organisation. I did so in the last Parliament and I do so today, at the earliest opportunity in this Parliament. We require as early a decision as possible: the continuing morale and efficiency of the work force relies upon it. Let us have a decision which gives the work force a future, which is right for the times and which will enable us to seek and gain a work load to guarantee the FMRO's continuing role in serving the Royal Navy.

I have set out some of my ambitions for this Parliament and for my constituency. I have done so in the context of a Gracious Speech containing the promise of measures which I have no doubt will benefit the country as a whole.

6.28 pm

Mr. Andrew Mackinlay (Thurrock): First, let me congratulate you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on being in the Chair. I have the distinction of being the first hon. Member whom you have called since you took up that office, and I wish you well.

It is a moving experience for any hon. Member to come to this place and make a maiden speech. I hope that it will not cause offence if I claim to have perhaps greater justification than most for being moved on this occasion. It is 30 years since I first visited this place and that visit was the genesis of my ambition to become a Member of Parliament. Since I was 12 years old, I have longed to be able to come to the House of Commons and, in trying to realise my ambition, I have fought five general elections. I think that that was matched by Madam Speaker, who had to fight many general elections before she came here to represent West Bromwich, West. I hasten to add that I do not covet the Chair.

The priceless privilege of becoming a Member of this place was given to me by the men and women of Thurrock. My constituency has a long river frontage which stretches from the boundary with London at Purfleet round to East Tilbury. It has a wide variety of geography and industry. It has agricultural areas, but predominantly it has riverside industries. I regret that the port of Tilbury was recently privatised, just prior to the general election. However, I have told the new management that I hope that it will consider me a friend of the port of Tilbury because I want to see it thrive in the competitive market that it faces. My constituency has two power stations and a heavy industrial sector along the river frontage.

My constituency also contains many good men and women of Essex who, I believe, have been unfairly criticised in the popular press as being somewhat insensitive people. I can testify that the men and women of Essex, and particularly of Thurrock, are deeply caring people who wish to see the best public services and the most caring society that can be established in the United Kingdom for their loved ones, their families and for other people. That is evident to some extent by the fact that they voted for the Labour party at the general election.

In all seriousness and if I may be candid, on the morning of 10 April, no doubt like many of my colleagues, I received a great shock and a grave disappointment. I confess that I was feeling greatly down and I almost tried to find out how to apply for the Chiltern Hundreds after the great surprise and disappointment of the election

result. However, I was sustained by my wife and family who have encouraged me throughout my political activities and by friends in the Labour party and the trade union movement to whom I pay tribute today.

Many of us received an uplift, however, when we came to the Chamber to elect Madam Speaker, and I shall remember that occasion as long as I live. It was an historic occasion, when the House of Commons was at its best. The fact that the outcome of the debate was uncertain added to the interest and historic nature of the occasion. I am proud to have been in the Chamber when Madam Speaker was elected and I need not apologise for the fact that I believe that the election of Madam Speaker gave me and my hon. Friends a great lift.

I wish now to follow a long-established tradition in this House and to say some nice things about other people. I welcome that tradition and I am pleased to refer to Mr. Tim Janman, who was my predecessor as Member for Thurrock. By his own definition, he was a member of the radical right. According to his lights, he prosecuted that belief with vigour and during his time here he was a diligent Member of Parliament. I wish to refer also to two other predecessors—Dr. Oonagh McDonald, and the late Hugh Delargy who died within the precincts of this place in 1976 and will long be remembered here and in Thurrock as a very fine constituency Member and a great parliamentary character.

I have fought five general elections and have always had good relations with my opponents. I fought Sir Nigel Fisher, the father of my hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher), on two occasions in 1974 for the seat in Surbiton. I fought John Moore in Croydon, Central and the new Minister for Health, the hon. Member for Peterborough (Dr. Mawhinney), who, on a personal level, I have been able to wish well, although I have given him notice that I shall do battle with him on a number of issues relating to my constituency.

It is fair that I should also refer today to my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition. I believe that the Labour party owes him and his wife an immeasurable debt. I believe that, in time, the country will also recognise that debt. My right hon. Friend has done a great deal to provide and promote a loyal Opposition in Parliament and I deeply regret his notice to resign the office of Leader of the Opposition. By July I hope that the press will be able to say honest things about him—something which the press has avoided for many years.

The tradition is that one does not trespass into hard political issues in a maiden speech, but there are one or two things in the Gracious Speech that are directly relevant to my constituency. The Gracious Speech claims that the Government will promote quality in the national health service. Unhappily, many of my constituents will find that somewhat surprising and cynical. We have had to endure the closure of the accident and emergency department at Orsett, which has resulted in enormous queues and long waiting times for people in pain and anxiety at the alternative accident and emergency department a long way away in Basildon.

If I have been charged with one thing by my constituents it is to press the Secretary of State for Health, the local health authority and the new trust to remedy a wrong perpetrated on my constituents 18 months ago by the closure of that accident and emergency department. That decision was extremely foolhardy, it is causing my constituents great pain and anxiety, and I intend to press the Government about that at every opportunity.

The Gracious Speech also refers to the privatisation of some rail services. When I referred to my constituency, I omitted to mention the fact that my constituents have to endure the so-called misery line between Fenchurch Street and Southend via Tilbury. That line is a scandal, with clapped out rolling stock and signalling. No privatisation or other Government action can alter the fact that there must be a major injection of public funds if there is to be a proper rail service for my constituents and others in south Essex. I give notice to the Treasury Bench that I intend to raise that issue at every opportunity.

The Gracious Speech also refers to improving industrial relations. Two things flow from that Government claim. First, the Government intend once again to attack the trade union movement. No doubt they believe that that is a fine and macho thing to do, but there is a danger that the Government will greatly diminish the opportunity of individuals to have their basic rights at work protected. Those rights have already been eroded and the few residual rights against unfair or arbitrary dismissal will effectively disappear if such legislation reaches the statute book.

Secondly, dockers were dismissed at Tilbury during the last Parliament. They followed the correct procedure of prosecuting their case at an industrial tribunal. They won at that tribunal and were awarded reinstatement and compensation, but the port of Tilbury and the Port of London Authority have not complied with those orders of reinstatement. It is a travesty of justice for the Government to claim to be paragons of virtue in promoting the rule of law. I challenge them to legislate to ensure that people will have their industrial tribunal awards implemented swiftly. I do not believe that they will do so, but the Secretary of State for Employment really must address that point as it is a matter of natural justice.

The Prime Minister referred to the widening of the European Community, and specifically referred to the admission of Poland into the Community by the end of the decade. I welcome that. However, Her Majesty's Government are not doing enough to help people in the former states of central Europe to promote their fragile democracies and economies. In my time in the House, I shall try to raise their interests, too. It is a scandal that people in Poland must wait and almost beg for visas for admission into the United Kingdom for legitimate reasons —in particular, students of English. Again, I hope that the Government will tackle that issue with some expedition —to right a wrong.

The Government have won four general elections in a row. They must now consider, as Opposition Members consider, the need to reflect on how democracy in the country and in the House can be extended and promoted. I consider the existing voting system to be indefensible. I go no further than that. I have an open mind on alternative systems, but I hope that the House will reflect upon the need urgently to consider whether we should have an improved voting system at the next general election.

We must also have regard for the need continually to ensure that this place checks the Executive. I was concerned to read in the press that there could be some shilly-shallying or delay in setting up Select Committees. As a new Back Bencher, I hope that there will be no delay and that Select Committees will be set up with the utmost

[Mr. Andrew Mackinlay]

expedition. As Back Benchers, it is our duty to check the Executive. That is an important weapon at our disposal to promote the best interests of our constituents.

Hon. Members could be complacent about our democratic institutions. I hope to play a small role as part of a loyal Opposition. I have said how disappointed I was on 10 April, but I repeated to myself over and again part of Winston Churchill's maxim, "in defeat, defiance". I intend in my small way to contribute to promoting a loyal Opposition to criticise, cajole and expose the deficiencies of the Executive and prepare, I hope, for a general election in perhaps four years' time when it will be our turn to form a Government.

Hon. Members need to be certain that our institutions are continually updated so that we promote and speak on behalf of our constituents. There could be complacency, but I hope that there is not. I am reminded of the words of Lord Hailsham, who referred to the dangers of parliamentary dictatorship. I hope that hon. Members, and in particular Conservative Members, will have regard to that point. We must ensure that our Westminster traditions are continually updated so that democracy can be promoted and sustained in the United Kingdom, I am privileged to have the opportunity to participate in that process over the next four years.

6.44 pm

Mr. Michael Spicer (Worcestershire, South): I have no difficulty or hesitation in congratulating the hon. Member for Thurrock (Mr. Mackinlay) on a witty, able, fluent and independent-minded maiden speech. Most hon. Members, including myself eighteen years ago, wait two or three months before making a maiden speech, but the hon. Gentleman has got his maiden speech off his chest at the first available opportunity, and he has done extremely well.

I also congratulate you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on rising to your high office. Had the Chairman of Ways and Means still been in the Chair, I would have made some jokes about tennis. As I do not know whether you play tennis, I shall pass by that matter and move straight to the meat of my speech. However, you will need very good neck muscles to move your head from side to side, as happens on the tennis court.

It will come as no surprise to the House that I welcome enthusiastically the bulk of the Queen's Speech. I judge it by the criteria by which I suspect that many of my hon. Friends will judge it—that is, by what it does for individual motivation. Contrary to most Opposition Members, I believe that society is no more and no less than the sum of the individuals within it. I therefore welcome, for instance, the references to increasing the individual's respect for the rule of law. That is in part a matter of proper sentencing policy. It is a matter in part of spending money on the police force. Perhaps it is a matter of divide between the two sides of the House, but it is also very much a matter of the rhetoric of and attitude towards personal responsibility. A crime such as joyriding is as much a matter of the responsibility of the parents of young people and the young people themselves as it is, as so often claimed, of society. I certainly welcome the aspect of the Queen's Speech referring to law and order.

Equally, I very much welcome those aspects of the Queen's Speech referring to the encouragement of individual motivation and of removing distortions in the economy. One of the major facets of motivating individuals is that they should have confidence in the means of producing and distributing goods within the economy. That is why I very much welcome the proposed measures for privatisation.

As a former Minister with responsibility for coal and electricity, I shall say one thing about coal privatisation. When I was in Government, I lost the battle to privatise the coal industry much earlier. I still think that I was right about that. There were arguments which prevailed against what I was saying, but the coal industry would have been protected and preserved in a rather better way than it has been within the public sector in the past two or three years. We would have had a new approach to management and marketing. Above all, the industry would have had access to private capital in a way that would have been of enormous benefit to it.

I offer the Government one word of caution. In doing so, I must declare an interest as chairman of the Association of Independent Power Producers. It would be a great shame if, in order to protect coal privatisation, special deals—in particular, secret special deals—were allowed between the coal industry and the large producers of electricity, National Power and PowerGen. If there were secret contracts which were, in a sense, supported by the Government so that the coal industry could be easily privatised, it would be extremely distortive. We need to have more competition among electricity producers and less protection for the big producers of electricity. If the privatisation of coal resulted in further protection for National Power and PowerGen, it would be very unfair.

I now refer to the Government's proposition to introduce a more balanced budget as we come out of the recession. They are absolutely right. Again, it is a distortion for the individual to have excess spending and, therefore, excess borrowing, which has all sorts of detrimental effects on the economy. That is something which we did not have in the 1980s but which we undoubtedly have today.

I hope that the Government's view is correct that as we come out of recession the take from income will be greater and expenditure will be less so that we get the balance right. The longer term problem is that demands on public spending are becoming greater by the day. Taking health as an example, the demands of new technology, new standards of living and an aging population build up continuously and create cumulative pressures for more spending on health.

The Government have only a few alternatives if they are to achieve a balanced budget. Either they say no to some of the increased demands, which will be increasingly difficult; or they raise taxes. Or they increase borrowing, which will mean unbalanced budgets. Or new means will have to be found—no doubt controversially—of funding an element of expenditure on, for example, health. That would mean some sort of mesh of private and public finance for health.

Socialist France goes even further than we do in involving private contribution in certain types of health provision, though obviously not chronic or emergency health provision. We shall have to move more towards such a system if we are to meet the increasing demand for public spending in that sector.

I have said that I agree with and welcome the bulk of the Queen's Speech, but I have reservations on two matters. One is referred to indirectly in the Queen's Speech under the "any other business" section, which says:

"Other measures will be laid before you."

The other matter is referred to directly.

The matter referred to indirectly was mentioned by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister in his speech. It is the so-called reform of Parliament. Proposals will be put before Parliament for its reform. I agree with what the hon. Member for Thurrock said about the need to protect this Parliament. It is a difficult and complex job because, unlike most Parliaments—for example, the Congress of the United States—our Parliament is not divided from the Executive. It is part of the Executive. It is controlled by the Executive. The Executive exists only so long as it controls the legislature. That is what gives the Executive its legitimacy.

As a result of the constitutional constraints under which we operate, it is therefore difficult for a British Parliament to establish any measure of independence from the Executive. One way in which this Parliament has traditionally exerted some measure of influence and control over and independence from the Executive is through the messiness with which we conduct our activities. It is precisely because we do not always know at what time the House will rise, and because we do not have a push-button, nine-to-five Parliament, that the Executive often have to take into consideration what Back-Bench Members on both sides of the House are saying to them.

It will be of enormous interest to the Executive to move across to a nine-to-five, nine-to-10 or whatever Parliament. It will be welcomed by them. It will make life much simpler to have a "reformed", "modernised" Parliament, which will be far easier to control. I shall therefore watch with enormous scepticism measures introduced to "reform" Parliament and make it far more manageable for the Executive.

The other matter about which I have reservations has been referred to several times in the debate. I understand that the legislation to ratify the treaty of Maastricht will be forthcoming soon. Many of my hon. Friends—and, I suspect, many Opposition Members—have great reservations about the inexorable move towards a federal Europe. There is a great deal of common ground in the House. The question is, "What is to be done?" What perspective should be taken on what is going on?

Some people argue that the thing is breaking up of its own accord. The Italians do not believe in the treaty and do not comply with it. The French have started to debate it in their assembly. The Germans do not like the thought of sacrificing their mark. It looks as though the Danes might reject the treaty in a referendum. It is argued that the move towards federalism is breaking up.

There is another argument that, even if the move towards federalism is not breaking up, Britain has achieved everything that it needs for itself by temporarily opting out.

In considering the treaty, all I can do is to read the print which I see in front of me and which I have been asked to ratify and, therefore, indirectly to sign. When I look at the specifics—the black and white of the treaty—I have certain strong anxieties.

For instance, I am anxious about the new concept of the union citizenship. I know that it is said that, although the union citizen will have new rights over and above and independent of those of the sovereign country, for the moment those rights will apply only to local government elections. But I also read in the small print that through unified voting those rights can be extended once we have set up the concept of a citizen who is no longer exclusively loyal to our country but has a wider loyalty.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): I hope that I have not interrupted my hon. Friend in the middle of his main point. Does it not go even further than he suggests? Some four years ago the House was asked to ratify a previous treaty—the Single European Act. It contained various provisions. One was that the rights of workers would be decided by unanimity. That is what we thought. That is what we were told. But since the treaty has been ratified, other interpretations have been put upon it. Whatever my hon. Friend reads into the treaty that he has been reading today, is there not a grave danger that others might try to take the treaty even further and that, whatever the small print, its interpretation by the European institutions will take us down roads that we have not even thought of?

Mr. Spicer: That is right. My hon. Friend's last point about the interpretation of the last treaty is what counts. It is the treaty that we have to go on. We cannot go on blandishments, hope, and so on. My hon. Friend is absolutely right that we must judge the thing on its merits and on the interpretation that we think that lawyers will place on the treaty in future days.

My second and more fundamental anxiety is about the concept of a single currency. I appreciate that it is difficult to make a popular issue out of the words "single currency". But the reason why it is of importance both to those who want a federal Europe, including some of my hon. Friends who have spoken today, and to those who are worried about it is that a single currency will necessitate a single economic authority to manage all aspects of the currency, including the fiscal, taxation, expenditure and monetary policies that go with it. It is not merely a question of the convenience of abolishing exchange offices where business men exchange money. It is a fundamental point.

If there is a single currency, there must be a single economic authority and a single economic policy. Throughout history, economic policy has gone to the centre of sovereignty. Civil wars have been fought about taxation policy and monetary policy. That is effectively what government is all about. It is about the taxation and the distribution of resources. If a country gives those powers away to some other power, it has given away the very essence and core of its sovereignty.

The single currency is the written-in objective of the Maastricht treaty. It is even worse when one considers that we are not only setting up an entirely new set of bodies to manage the currency but giving its control to a central bank mechanism which is independent of politicians and the people who represent society. Therefore, there is a double whammy, to use the phrase which loomed large in the general election.

The question is whether the treaty of Maastricht moves in that direction. There is the argument that we have given ourselves the possibility to opt out. There is the point that countries must converge under the current terms of the treaty, terms that are alterable or can be fiddled. The Italians have already said that they would fiddle their

[Mr. Spicer]

convergence conditions. The fundamental question remains: are we, by signing the treaty, inexorably moving towards a single currency or not? That is the question that I must ask myself.

When we come to sign a treaty which sets up institutions—in stage 2 we have pretty well reached the point when we shall set up a European monetary institute, the precursor of a single, economic, banking authority, which will undoubtedly exist whatever the opt-out clauses—we are on an escalator off which it will be difficult to climb. Once we have the institutions, they will have a certain permanency, certainly if they are included in a signed treaty. There will be a self-fulfilling element. They will be magnets drawing us ultimately to a single economy and, thus, a federal Europe. I cannot in any circumstances conceive of a single economic authority without a federal structure with it—a Parliament and all the other trappings of a federal centralised Government.

The treaty of Maastricht is of enormous importance. It is an absolutely fundamental step in the direction of a federal Europe. It is an irrevocable step—and that word is used throughout the treaty. It will be impossible to reverse it. Therefore, the House will hear a great deal more from me—if I catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, or that of your colleagues—as we approach this historic step. There is no way it can be fudged. We must take a view either one way or the other. I am extremely concerned at what I have read in the treaty, and I hope to express my concern in the weeks ahead.

7.2 pm

Mr. Frank Cook (Stockton, North): I have listened with great interest to the rather telling statement by the hon. Member for Worcestershire, South (Mr. Spicer). We shall long remember the words that he used this evening because he presented a different picture from the continued and repeated protestations of unanimity by Conservative party spokesmen during the election campaign. The real test will come when the House first divides on the matter. The Government's much reduced majority will put the issue well within striking range of the hon. Gentleman and his colleagues if they choose to maintain the strength of this evening's protestation.

Mr. Marlow: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Cook: No, I will not.

Mr. Marlow: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Cook: I must make it plain to the hon. Gentleman: I have just said that I will not give way. Is that understood?

I have already had the considerable pleasure of offering you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, congratulations personally. I should like to place on record my very best wishes for your future success and efficacy in the post that you occupy. I hope that you have a long and effective period of tenure.

The Gracious Speech contains many matters with which we can take issue, and we have a further five and a bit days to discuss it. Besides thanking you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for allowing me to catch your eye this evening, I should like to express my regret that I cannot be here when we divide on the Gracious Speech. Sadly, the hardships of the office that we hold in this House require me to be in Italy from Sunday to Wednesday of next week and then to pass on rapidly to Canada. I beg the sympathy of the House when I undergo those tests of tenacity.

I could be here for a fortnight discussing many of the issues raised, but I wish to raise specifically the statement in the Gracious Speech that Her Majesty's Government "will promote sound finance and budgetary discipline." I shall make two references under this heading.

The first subject has already been introduced by my hon. Friend the Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. Clapham), who made an excellent maiden speech, and was touched on by the hon. Member for Bedfordshire, South-West (Mr. Madel). I refer to the question of pension funds. No one would disagree with the statement that Mirror Group employees and those retired from Mirror Group employment have suffered a hideous form of treachery. It is a source of regret to me that no comment is made in the Gracious Speech on the Government's intention to take an active interest in resolving that pension fund problem.

The matter goes further than that. The whole question of property rights with regard to surplus funds generated by pension funds causes great concern. In the past, several pension funds have assessed the surplus moneys generated by their activities and decided to cream them off and apply them in ways as yet unspecified. We have been unable to determine the manner in which they have been disposed of.

As a member of the national executive of my union I often took part in negotiations on behalf of my fellow members when pension conditions and improvements to pension schemes were negotiated, discussed and settled as a form of deferred wage increase. The maturation of the moneys that were agreed and set aside on those occasions form the property of the members and other beneficiaries under the scheme. To take the moneys and apply them in any other way is a serious form of defalcation. This major question needs resolution. If the Government are not prepared to state an opinion of their own volition, the matter should be subject to judicial review. I hope that the Government will treat the matter seriously and hand it over expeditiously to a judicial inquiry.

My second question bears on yet another form of moral credit rating for finance houses, but in this instance I am referring to banking. It is not only the instance of BCCI which questions the whole trustworthiness of banks at this stage in the 20th century. Other serious questions need to be asked and effectively answered. I am talking about whose interests the banks serve. Does a bank serve the interests of its customers or those of its shareholders? In a wide range of instances the interests of the one do not coincide with the interests of the other. Let me give the House an example and I shall try not to be too long with it.

I shall describe a scenario in which a bank engages in business with another two companies, one of which is a major oil company and the other an electronics company. The three companies form a joint independent company, which does not stand on its own but is funded by the three partners in equal amounts. In competition with other companies, that joint company secures a licence from the Department of Trade and Industry allowing it to operate a telecom network. As that telecom network is not well known, it engages the services of an advertising agency. The advertising agency is given a fixed-term contract with fixed fees, to terminate in 1993. It is required to produce a

logo and a registered mark to help the marketing and a marketing strategy so that the operation of the telecom network will be successful.

The relationship continues for some time until the three partners—the bank, the oil company and the electronics company—tire of the toil that they have created and decide that they want to sell it on, together with the DTI telepoint licence. However, while they are looking for a buyer they stop paying the bills to the advertising agency contracted to look after their affairs. That period of default lasts for four months, during which time the advertising agency finds that it must reduce by 50 per cent. the number of its staff, which it had enhanced to service the contract. It loses its credit rating, has to increase its borrowing and reduce the salaries of all its employees. In the meanwhile, its bank reduces its overdraft facilities by a half.

After that four months period of hardship, a foreign buyer is found for the independent company. It is a Hong Kong—Li Ka Shing—buyer, which decides not to honour the contract with the advertising agency. It now has the intellectual property in the form of a logo, a registered mark and a marketing strategy, but refuses to pay the outstanding moneys. In the meantime, the advertising agency is still suffering considerable hardship and is being charged premium interest by its bank on the borrowing needed to keep it afloat. The outstanding money is finally paid, but no question is made of the intellectual property and no settlement is offered for the consequential loss to the advertising agency as a result of all the additional financial charges made by the bank.

The matter is complex and I apologise to the House for having gone on for so long. But the nub of the question is the matter of the bank. Not only was it a third partner in the independent company but it was also the bank offering overdraft facilities to the advertising agency. It therefore had a contractual relationship with the advertising agency while the agency was its customer. Having placed the agency in financial jeopardy, it was also charging premium rates of interest to fund that position of jeopardy. That is a serious abuse of a position of trust and it renders the bank susceptible to being termed "untrustworthy". Any bank that can conduct its affairs in that way must be questioned. I do not refer to its legal operation because I know that the legal niceties of a case can be argued and would have to be settled in court. Rather, I refer to the moral consideration and obligations, and whether banks take full regard of their responsibility to their customers as well as shareholders.

The House will appreciate that the bank, in seeking to gag its customer, which is still fighting for survival, by demanding security of £30,000 on any hearing, was engaging in practices akin to blackmail. It is rather like people entering a game of blind brag with a partner whom they know can, at any time, buy the pot and render them penniless. I remind the House that blind brag, under any rules, is illegal in this country.

What do I suggest is a sensible way to handle such a problem? I have already suggested a judicial review to examine pension funds and the disposal of their surplus cash. In this issue, nothing less than a royal commission would suffice, because the bank in question is Barclays, the oil company is Shell and the electronics company is Philips. If such highly respected companies can behave in that way with an advertising agency like Hook—not only the company but its directors' houses and the jobs of its staff were placed in severe jeopardy—it is about time that the Government put their money where their mouth is, lived up to their commitment on a citizens charter, and announced a royal commission on those matters.

7.16 pm

Mr. William Powell (Corby): The hon. Member for Stockton, North (Mr. Cook) did the House a great service in raising certain matters and I hope that serious consideration will be given to the problems faced by the Maxwell pensioners and to the behaviour, more and more commonly identified, of some of our banks.

I, too, warmly congratulate you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on your elevation to the throne on which you now sit. We all look forward to sitting under your chairmanship in debates throughout this Parliament.

I am sorry that I was not called when the Chairman of Ways and Means, my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, South (Mr. Morris), was in the Chair because I should like to have been the first Northamptonshire Member to have congratulated him on his elevation, which will be widely welcomed in Northamptonshire. We are proud of the honour that has been conferred on him, and I know that he will be every bit as distinguished as previous holders of that office.

I warmly welcome the Queen's Speech and will be able enthusiastically to support it. If my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister is identified with any themes of public policy, they must be the elimination of inflation and the improvement in the standard and quality of our public services. The Queen's Speech underlines yet again his commitment and that of the Government to ensuring that we do not reignite inflation and that we take determined steps to improve the quality and standards of our public services.

Having placed my remarks in that framework, may I make some general points? The first must be directed to my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House. In the past two Parliaments in which I have sat it has been comparatively easy for the Treasury Bench to ignore substantial criticism and comments from both sides of the House because the Government have enjoyed a handsome majority. Not every point that is raised in the House is party political, and I hope that my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House will make a more determined effort than some of his predecessors to draw to the attention of individual Ministers remarks made from all corners. On many occasions I have raised matters in the House and it has subsequently become quite clear that my remarks have not been drawn to the attention of Ministers, as they should have been. Ministers should have a keener interest in what is said on the Floor of the House than has sometimes been the case. The fact that the Government will have to work harder to obtain a majority will, I hope, help to concentrate the mind. A number of Ministers have enjoyed the luxury of not having to take into account criticisms made, not merely by Conservative Members, but by Opposition Members.

I hope that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister will avoid the temptation to reshuffle Ministers constantly. One of the more debilitating consequences of the length of office of his predecessor was the expectation of an annual reshuffle of Ministers. Comparatively early in the parliamentary year, newspapers, often short of news, began to speculate on who would be involved in musical

[Mr. William Powell]

chairs at the end of term and who would lose their position. That had the effect of undermining the work of individual Ministers whose names appeared in the newspapers. It is suggested that the then Prime Minister herself, through her press secretary, was one of those responsible for hinting that various Ministers might not survive the summer term.

I strongly support the new Cabinet appointed by my right hon. Friend. A number of Ministries would benefit if their Secretaries of State were in office for the full term of this Parliament. There is no great advantage in constantly chopping and changing. The Department of Trade and Industry has seldom had the same Minister in charge for 18 months; often it has been less than a year. Some spheres of policy require prolonged commitment from individual heads—for example, the Ministry of Defence and the Department of Transport, where no advantage is to be gained from endless games of musical chairs.

I hope that, under the paragraph

"Other measures will be laid before you",

the Lord Chancellor will soon bring forward legislation to reduce the maximum age at which judges can retire. I have raised that matter in the House on a number of occasions, but it has not been referred to the Lord Chancellor. When I corresponded with him, it became obvious that he was unaware of remarks that had been made in the House.

The Lord Chancellor has published a paper about lowering the retirement age of judges on which he is seeking consultation. The sooner that he is able to bring the consultation process to a conclusion, and the sooner legislation is laid before Parliament to reduce the retirement age from 75 years to the 70 years that the Lord Chancellor now proposes, the better. I hope that, on reflection, the Lord Chancellor will favour the age of 68.

I also hope that the legislation will explicitly refer to existing judges who may be promoted so that the new retirement age will affect them after their promotion. The great judge Lord Denning, although appointed a judge before the Judicial Pensions Act 1959, was promoted to Master of the Rolls after it but did not have to surrender the requirement to retire at the age of 75. Some of the mischief that occurred because he continued in office beyond that age would have been avoided if, on his promotion to Master of the Rolls, he had been bound by the 1959 legislation.

There are various matters that I have raised several times in the House to which I want the Government to pay closer attention than they have so far been willing to do. There is a need to establish an international court of first instance criminal jurisdiction to deal with cases such as the Lockerbie incident, IRA trials in this country, and the difficulties about extradition. The international dimension of crime which involves drugs, terrorism and kidnapping shows the need for such a court.

An enormous amount of work has been carried out on the subject throughout the world, and although the Government of our country may not be very enthusiastic about it, they will be aware that the Governments of many other countries are. Recently, Germany, Israel, Venezuela and Zimbabwe have expressed support for such an idea. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs will be aware of support for the proposal in Italy, India and elsewhere. I was delighted that the matter was recently raised in the Canadian Parliament.

If we cannot have a world court, we should at least have a Community court within the EC so that crimes that cross borders within the Community can be tried at a court that covers all Community countries rather than having to be dealt with through the unsatisfactory extradition process, with all the accompanying problems such as the admissibility of evidence. That idea has been pursued in the United Nations and should be taken more seriously in this country.

The single most important issue facing the world is the future of the talks on the general agreement on tariffs and trade. In the past, those matters have been debated in the House by being parcelled up into agriculture, and the textile, shoe and various other industries that are affected by the GATT talks. The House needs the opportunity to reaffirm its belief in and commitment to free trade, as well as giving support to the Government in the negotiations and making clear to the other Governments involved in the GATT talks the importance of a successful conclusion to the negotiations, not just for this country, but for all our trading partners and the world generally.

During the negotiations that led up to Maastricht, my right hon. Friends were fond of saying that other Community countries must realise the importance of this House, and the fact that the Government would have to be able to carry through the House anything agreed at Maastricht. Precisely the same approach should be adopted to the GATT negotiations so that other countries are aware of the profound and long-held commitment of this country to free trade, and to opening up opportunities for trade and the growth that goes with it, for rich and poor countries alike.

I welcome the commitment to strong defence. In the past few years, the world has become not safer, but more dangerous. Within our own continent we already face difficulties that I know will become worse. The eastern part of our continent is likely to go through a period of high inflation and rising social tensions. That phenomenon will not be isolated to the eastern part of the continent, and is bound to have an impact on those of us who live in the more prosperous western part.

Therefore, we must be cautious about running down our defences. Of course, there will have to be changes and adjustments, modernisation and a rethink about the process of British defence policy in future. That is one reason why it is so necessary for my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence to spend a long period in office. It would be wrong to imagine that it will be plain sailing for us in this continent; we know how other problems affect other continents, not least the difficulties of famine and AIDS raging through Africa, all of which will have consequences for us.

I raise again in the House a matter about which I have spoken before—dyslexia. I was absolutely overjoyed when, in last autumn's Queen's Speech, my then right hon. Friend the Member for Worcester, Mr. Peter Walker, spoke of dyslexia. Fortunately, within education, we are becoming much more aware of the number of children with dyslexia. However, I wish to focus on the fact that dyslexia is not confined to those at school. Many children leave school without being diagnosed as dyslexic whose

condition may not be diagnosed until years later and for whom there are no training facilities to enable them to overcome that disability.

I am aware that I am making a special plea for people with a condition in which I happen to be particularly interested; many other handicapped conditions require a similar commitment. I make the plea for those with dyslexia because I have been the only person to raise in Parliament the question of post-education training for people who suffer from dyslexia, for whom there are no schemes at present. I urge my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment to emphasise the importance of overcoming disabilities of this sort by means of the training programmes that are sponsored in this country.

We must also persist with ensuring that the guarantee of high quality training given to 16 and 17-year-olds is fulfilled. My right hon. and learned Friend the former Secretary of State for Employment—now Secretary of State for the Environment—was fond of outlining how bankable this guarantee was, but I am not convinced that it always was. The new Secretary of State will have to be careful to ensure that the Government's promises are fulfilled at ground level, where all sorts of difficulties may make it difficult to carry out these training programmes —changes of staff, difficulties in finding replacement staff, and so on. I certainly know of a number of constituents of mine who found the Government's so-called guarantee a disappointment, and that cannot be allowed to continue.

I hope that the policies initiated by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry during his 16 months at the Department of the Environment will be allowed to continue. I hope especially that the east Thames corridor remains the focus of planning decisions in the south-east and that there will be no return to the M4/M3 corridors dominating everything.

I also hope that the channel tunnel rail link into King's Cross never proceeds. I cannot begin to understand why traffic from the regions, from the north-west, from Scotland, the west midlands and Yorkshire, should come into London. It would seem much more sensible for the railway to bypass London, connecting all the main routes from the regions. That is likely to be considerably cheaper to construct than an urban, probably underground, high-speed railway line through London. I do not imagine for a moment that people travelling from Manchester to Paris on a high-speed rail link will really want to go into London first.

Why not build a dedicated line, as the French are doing, which goes from Rugby, through which every single train from the west midlands, the north-west and the west coast of Scotland must pass, to Peterborough, through which every train from Yorkshire, from the north-east and from Edinburgh must pass; thence down to Stansted airport where—the French have done this, too—rail, air and road transport can be integrated? From there the line could go straight down to the channel tunnel itself. The cost of constructing such a line is likely to be much less per mile than a line into east London.

I welcome the Government's commitment to the rent-to-mortgages scheme, which is likely to benefit many thousands of my constituents. They will welcome the chance of benefiting from it as soon as possible.

I hope that the Government will ensure much more publicity for these opportunities than they frequently have done in the past. I remember the undertaking that all local authorities, for instance, would distribute the tenants charter. Two district councils cover my constituency, one of them a safe Labour authority and the other a safe Conservative authority: neither has distributed the tenants charter, even though it is becoming more and more important. I know from my surgeries, home visits and all the other constituency work that I do that law-abiding tenants face increasing difficulties with problem neighbours. Again and again I find that the peace and quiet of perfectly honest people who may have lived in their homes for a long time are being disturbed, sometimes seriously, because new unneighbourly neighbours have moved in next door or close by. The tenants charter has a number of important things to say—of reassurance and of authority —to those whose peace is being thus disrupted.

The reports of the Audit Commission too rarely emerge into the public domain. They are sent to local authorities, but unfortunately all too often local authorities bottle up the matters internally so that they never come out in the open. I should like all Audit Commission reports relating to local authorities to be sent to the relevant Members of Parliament. They should also go to the press. Moreover, I should like a new institution of this House to be set up. We should form a sub-committee of the Public Accounts Committee, which is our most important and prestigious Select Committee. The sub-committee should look into the Audit Commission's report. With at least 50 per cent.— some would say 75 per cent.—of local authority finance coming from the general taxpayer, not from the chargepayer, taxpayers' money is being spent on a huge scale by local authorities, and this House, as the guardian of the nation's taxes, has a legitimate interest in seeing that what local authorities spend of taxpayers' money receives much more public attention. One of the best ways of achieving this would be to give the PAC a large remit, perhaps by way of a sub-committee, which would enable this sort of work to be done as professionally as the PAC does its other work.

I am sure that it is true to say that I represent more people whom the social scientists would describe as belonging to social group E than any other Conservative Member of Parliament. In more colloquial language, I represent large numbers of people at the bottom of the pile. One of the reasons why I am here, greatly to the surprise of my opponents, is that more people of that sort of background voted for me than my opponents believed possible. I must confess, however, that some of the problems associated with these people are too easily overlooked by Ministers and by the Treasury. All Government policies should be analysed and assessed in terms of their impact on the poorest and most disadvantaged people.

Recently we have read and learnt about the riots in Los Angeles. I have read Sunday's newspapers and the newspapers since then with much interest. *The Sunday Times* leading article and Lord Rees-Mogg's article in *The Independent* on Monday were both extremely interesting. Both referred to the racial cauldron which has appeared in so many American cities and which has created an underclass of disadvantaged people. I do not represent many who could be described as having an ethnic background, but I do represent a large number of disadvantaged people. In 1980, about 25 per cent. of children born in the largest town in my constituency were born, to use old-fashioned language, outside wedlock. Today the figure is more than 40 per cent. In some primary

[Mr. William Powell]

schools in my constituency, at least 60 per cent. of children come from broken homes where there is no father. Many Opposition Members will have similar experiences. Inevitably, there is acute instability.

The leading article in *The Sunday Times* of 3 May makes the point with force, but within the context of the American racial situation. I again underline that what I have to face and deal with in Corby every day has nothing to do with race but has everything to do with people who are at the bottom of the pile and who totally depend upon the state for their income and for all the facilities that make life at all possible for them. The leading article refers to a report by an American professor in a seminal work published a decade ago about the black American family. Perhaps hon. Members will bear with me and eliminate from the words that I am about to read any reference to race and treat them as being about people who are at the bottom of the pile. The words still ring true. The article states:

"And finally these people are destroyed by welfare which produced a culture of dependency among single parent mothers, encouraged them to have children they could not cope with, and allowed fathers to escape their obligations."

His conclusion was that

"the cycle of welfare dependency of single parent mothers on welfare raising children who grew up to produce their own single parent families on welfare was the final nail in the coffin of the black family."

These are all controversial matters, and the last thing that I would wish is to be considered in any way critical of young ladies in these circumstances. I have to deal with many families in which there is no male figure because the men have comprehensively and absolutely walked away from their responsibilities.

I wish to see a society in which it is possible for people to break out of the trap of poverty. Traps are imposed by the welfare benefits system and by low levels of education and, therefore, there are few job opportunities and virtually no possibility of being able to earn sufficient income to enable people to escape the poverty trap. The Government must address that. As *The Sunday Times* suggested, they must look at the welfare system that is being established in the state of New Jersey to see whether any lessons which will help towards greater social mobility away from the trap at the bottom of the system can be learnt.

Above all, the Government will have to spend more to develop much better education facilities at the bottom of the pile. In that context, my analysis parts company with that of many Opposition Members. More of the same in our education system is not the answer. The comprehensive system which was established in the 1960s has had 30 years to work but does not offer the way out that it should. However, the opportunities provided in city technology colleges and other such places are highly relevant to the most disadvantaged in our society.

It will be necessary to invest heavily in new institutions of education, not in Surrey or in prosperous Hertfordshire, or in the constituencies of the great majority of my hon. and right hon. Friends, but in the towns and cities that need investment in education and in its new opportunities. That is bitterly opposed by many Labour authorities and Labour supporters. They are profoundly wrong. My experience shows that the way to better education is to put abnormal and special facilities in the areas of greatest disadvantage. If that is done, it will offer a ladder out of the trap which presently imprisons far too many of our fellow countrymen. The future for those at the bottom of the pile is not in the extreme shades of colour that some might suggest.

Too many people have no confidence whatever not only in the Government but in local government. My Labour opponent in the general election was good enough to say in our local newspaper that the ruling Labour group on the district council had become complacent and did not realise the extent to which Labour voters had become thoroughly fed up and disenchanted with the low quality public services being provided by that authority. Those were the words of my Labour opponent who expected to win the contest. There is much greater disillusionment with the whole process of government, local and national, than many people are prepared to concede. Such matters will have to be addressed at grass roots level, rather than by imposing a centralised structure, which has not worked and which does not offer the opportunity for advancement.

I am here because many people who have nothing in this world voted for me. They did so because by voting for me they thought that they were more likely to get a way out of nothing than by voting for my opponents. That may be difficult for some people to come to terms with, but it is true. The opportunities provided by a Conservative Government are much greater than those that would have been provided by any other Government.

I welcome the Gracious Speech and look forward to a successful Parliament.

7.46 pm

Mr. Mike Hall (Warrington, South): Last week, I was privileged to participate in the election of Miss Betty Boothroyd as Speaker. As a new Member, participating in that vote gave me great encouragement. I congratulate you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on your appointment. I am sure that you will preside over the affairs of the House with firm authority and that you will not overlook Back Benchers.

When I considered my maiden speech, I did not think that I should have the opportunity to deliver it on the first day of the debate on the Gracious Speech, nor that I should have to wait 30 minutes to do so, through the longest speech in the debate. I congratulate my hon. Friends the Members for Thurrock (Mr. Mackinlay), for Sheffield, Attercliffe (Mr. Betts) and for Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. Clapham) on excellent maiden speeches. I hope that my own will live up to the expectation that their speeches created.

It is an honour and a privilege to be here and to make my maiden speech in the presence of my wife, without whose complete support and encouragement over the past 13 years in politics I might not have been here. It is a pity that our son Thomas could not be here, but perhaps school is a more important issue for a boy of 11. It is also a privilege sincerely to thank my friends Harold and Ivy Edwards, who are members of the Warrington Co-op party and have supported my political career at every turn for the past 13 years.

In the finest traditions of the House, I pay tribute to the people who represented Warrington, South before me. My immediate predecessor, Mr. Chris Butler, was elected in 1987. At that time, I had been leader of Warrington borough council for two years and we immediately crossed

swords over the poll tax. Mr. Butler was ardently in favour of the poll tax and I was totally against it. From that moment, we debated many national issues in the context of Warrington borough council and I pay tribute to Chris Butler for participating in those debates, thus allowing them to be aired in a local context. In one sense it would be hypocritical of me to pass favourable comments on Mr. Butler. We have been political opponents for the past five years and the House will know that in the recently fought general election I was fortunate to have 191 votes more than Chris. However, Chris was joint secretary of the all-party committee on drug misuse and I know that his work as a member of that committee was well appreciated. He also played a full part in the work of the all-party committee on AIDS and made a positive contribution to its deliberations.

Chris Butler's predecessor was Mark Carlisle, now Lord Carlisle of Bucklow. From 1979 to 1981 Mark Carlisle was Secretary of State for Education and Science. He was responsible for ensuring that the Education Act 1981 found its way on to the statute book. It was a far-sighted and important piece of education legislation in the context of the education debate since the turn of the century. The Act removed the stigma of categorisation from handicapped school pupils, replacing it with the recognition that individual pupils should have their special needs assessed individually and that provision for special needs should be based on statementing within the terms of the 1981 Act. It was a superb piece of legislation. It placed on the statute book the recommendations of the Warnock Committee, set up under a Labour Government by the then Secretary of State for Education and Science, Shirley Williams. As I have said, it was a far-sighted piece of legislation. It looked further to the future and was far better than the onslaught on education that we have seen in the past 13 years while the Tory party has been in power. It should be remembered that Mark Carlisle left his job in Mrs. Thatcher's first reshuffle.

The House will recall that Mark Carlisle came to the House in 1964 as the Member for Runcorn. Following a Boundary Commission report, he became the hon. and learned Member for Warrington, South. That was the area which encompassed most of his constituency. He did an extremely good job.

It is traditional for a maiden speaker to say a little about his constituency. Warrington, South is a diverse and physically divided constituency. Running through the entire constituency are the Manchester ship canal and the River Mersey. To the north-east of my constituency are the two parishes of Great Sankey and Penketh. They are physically divided from the rest of the constituency by the ship canal and the Mersey. It is not possible to get to the rest of Warrington, South without passing through the constituency of a good friend of mine, my hon. Friend the Member for Warrington, North (Mr. Hoyle), or taking a chance and swimming across the Mersey, which is not to be advised—even though there have been some major improvements in the quality of the water.

Two parts of my constituency, Latchford and Westy, form part of the old and famous Warrington constituency. The House will recall the 1981 by-election. The two areas are separated from the rest of the constituency by the Manchester ship canal.

The rest of Warrington, South is a prosperous area that is both suburban and rural. Attached to it are the 16,000 electors who live in Runcorn. Runcorn is not recognised in the name of the constituency and those people often feel left out. In fact, they played a major part in the election. I thank all those who live in the constituency of Warrington, South, including Runcorn, who voted for me, but I wish to stress that I am here to represent the interests of the constituency as a whole.

I listened to the Gracious Speech this morning in the House of Lords. I should say "in another place". I must get used to the traditions of the House. I hope that you will forgive me, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if I call you Mr. Mayor. Tomorrow I shall relinquish my position as leader of Warrington borough council, so perhaps I shall be able to break the habit quickly.

When I listened to the Gracious Speech, I was looking for a programme of legislation that would be relevant to the problems that we face in the 1990s. Unfortunately, we have been presented with a programme of legislation which seemingly will produce more of the same. The past 13 years of Conservative rule have been characterised by, first, the feverish accumulation of wealth in private hands. There have been tax cuts for the rich and benefit cuts for the poor. Privatisation has removed revenues which the Treasury would have received from gas and electricity undertakings and the like. Those revenues are now finding their way into the dividends of private companies. We have seen wage increases for the bosses and price increases for the rest of us. It seems that that will continue if the programme outlined in the Gracious Speech is followed through and finds its way on to the statute book.

The second characteristic of the past 13 years of Tory government has been increases in poverty, homelessness and unemployment. It is a travesty that 12 million people live on or below poverty levels. There has been a 7 million increase since 1979. It is obscene that 3 million children are now living in poverty.

The parishioners of St. James, Great Sankey recently conducted a survey of homelessness. They found that, in Warrington, 600 16 to 18-year-olds were without a home. That stands to be condemned in what we call a modern industrial society. Nothing in the Gracious Speech offers hope to the homeless. There is nothing in it to regenerate the building of housing for rent under the control of local authorities. Local authorities should be able to use their reserves to build housing for rent and to change the accommodation already under their control to accommodate homeless individuals and families.

In Warrington, South, 3,914 people are out of work and claiming benefit. Nationally, 2·7 million are out of work. Those are the statistics after the figures have been revised 30 times by the Tory Government. If unemployment had been calculated in 1979 by the method that the Tories have now adopted, there would not have been any.

One of the greatest problems in my constituency is that in the Runcorn area, where there are 16,000 electors, 1,418 are unemployed. That constitutes 16 per cent. of the active work force. That is a disgrace. There is not one reference in the Gracious Speech to the way in which unemployment will be tackled.

The third characteristic of Conservative government in the past 13 years has been an arrogant use of power. The Tories have undermined the democratic process. I am gravely concerned about the concept of democracy in Britain. The issue has been raised by several hon. Members on both sides of the House.

Before the general election the Conservative party used all the powers available to it to start a campaign to distort,

[Mr. Mike Hall]

misinterpret, misrepresent and undermine the policies that the Labour party was putting to the electorate. The Conservative party was aided and abetted by the tabloid press, which no doubt acted in concert with it. The Conservative party was able successfully to undermine the Labour party's message.

I am sure that all right hon. and hon. Members will agree that democracy is about choice, but that choice should be well informed and accurately informed. That process was deliberately undermined during the general election. I am pleased, however, that we saw the green shoots of democratic recovery appear when we elected the then hon. Member for West Bromwich, West (Miss Boothroyd) Speaker of this place. Having heard and read the Gracious Speech, however, I am doubtful whether we shall see the recovery continue.

The Government must accept their responsibility to safeguard democracy. After all, they exercise power in the House. It is their responsibility to ensure that we have a sound democracy. Therefore, they must use their power fairly and even-handedly. I hope that we may look forward to questions from my right hon. and hon. Friends being answered straightforwardly during Prime Minister's questions. More importantly, we need a code of conduct for the press similar to that which applies to television and radio. We must ensure that political debate is reported fairly, evenly and accurately. That will be a major measure to support democracy.

Reinhold Miebuhr wrote "The Children of Light and the Children of Darkness" in 1944. He made the following statement:

"Man's capacity for justice makes democracy possible, but man's inclination to injustice makes democracy necessary."

In this Parliament we need sound democracy, not lectures from the Government.

We know that a commission is about to tour the country to examine the prospects of introducing unitary authorities based on existing district council boundaries. That is a sound movement in our democracy as it transfers power to the people at the grass roots. I look forward to a speedy conclusion to the commission's work. I also look forward to a visit to the county of Cheshire in the near future, and to unitary government in the Warrington constituency that I now represent.

My deputy leader on Warrington borough council, John Gartside, promoted the idea of unitary authorities in Warrington 11 years ago. He said then that it would be useful for power to be transferred from the county councils to the borough councils, so that we could exercise power in Warrington on behalf of the people themselves. He was right, and I hope that the commission will reach the same conclusion soon.

An old Member of the House advised me to do three things after my election: to go to the Fees Office and get myself signed on; to make my maiden speech, because life would become a lot easier after that; and to get myself an office. I have done two of those three things—I wonder how long I shall have to wait for the office.

8 pm

Mr. Derek Conway (Shrewsbury and Atcham): First, Mr. Deputy Speaker, let me congratulate you on your appointment and welcome you to the Chair. A future of long and lonely vigils lies ahead of you, but I hope that your service in the Chair will not be without its lighter moments.

I am sure that the House will join me in congratulating the hon. Member for Warrington, South (Mr. Hall) on his maiden speech. He made some generous comments about my former colleague Chris Butler, and I know that my hon. Friends will welcome the tribute that he paid to his predecessor. Chris Butler was an extremely hardworking representative of Warrington, South, and he will be sadly missed by his Conservative colleagues. The warm words uttered by his successor demonstrate the effort that he put into representing his constituency.

The new hon. Member for Warrington, South brings to the House considerable experience not only of teaching but of local government: that was clear from the confidence with which he spoke. I am sure that he appreciates that the patience with which the House listened to his speech did not necessarily constitute an endorsement of its content. Although we are all enamoured of his delivery, he may not receive a silent reception in future, for much of what he said was controversial. I hope that the hon. Gentleman enjoyed this evening's occasion, but he can be assured of a slightly rougher ride next time. For all that, his speech was very good and very well delivered, and I am sure that Warrington, South will have a potent voice in the Chamber.

Now that you are in the Chair, Madam Deputy Speaker, I have an opportunity to ingratiate myself with a second occupant, in the hope of stacking up favours for the future. We are all delighted about your appointment, and we wish you extremely well. Some hon. Members have served in Standing Committee under your chairmanship. I recall serving on the Standing Committee that considered the Water Bill—I believe that it was the longest Committee stage that we have ever had, and it was certainly the longest since the war. Your chairmanship then, Madam Deputy Speaker, was patently fair but also good-humoured; nevertheless, as right hon. and hon. Members will discover, you are not a lady to be crossed. I have no doubt that the business of the Chamber will proceed very fairly under your wise guidance: long may you sit there.

Let me get all my obsequiousness out of the way. Another person whom I should congratulate—we go back far too many years, man and boy—is my hon. Friend the Member for Hornchurch (Mr. Squire), who appeared at the Dispatch Box today as a new Minister. I hope that he enjoyed the speeches that concerned his Department.

When Conway stands up to speak in the Chamber, all the chairs change. I am delighted to see that my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, West (Mr. Sackville) has arrived. His was indeed a wonderful victory, and I am glad to see that he has left the office that is popularly known as the Stasi—but better known as the Whips' Office—and taken on ministerial responsibilities.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker) delivered a humorous speech which was widely enjoyed. He did so competently, as befits a man who has held some of the great offices of state. As I listened, I could not help reflecting that the names of those who have held offices of Home Secretary, Chancellor of the Exchequer and Foreign Secretary tend to come and go with history. No doubt my right hon Friend's will be one of those names; but I suspect that the title "Baker days" will long remain. It is a term that all hon. Members with children

hear regularly. In my ignorance, I thought initially that it had something to do with domestic science, but I was soon put straight about the purpose of "Baker days". I suspect that my right hon. Friend has left his mark on the education world for many years to come.

I think that my right hon. Friend has also done something more serious. His education reforms will be widely and, I believe, rightly considered to have provided a sound footing for state education. It is possible that the reforms begun by him and continued by my right hon. and learned Friend, the present Home Secretary, will prove to have done more to sound the death knell of second-rate private schools than anything that the class warriors could ever have said or done in the Chamber. Those reforms will, I think, ensure that those who continue to provide education in the private sector must look to their laurels. Evidence in my constituency suggests that—particularly at primary-school level, but also at secondary level—the challenges and competition that are coming from the maintained sector are encouraging and welcome.

Seconding the motion, my hon. Friend the Member for Gedling (Mr. Mitchell) spoke with humour and competence. As he hinted to the House, he is sometimes the subject of envy or jealousy, perhaps because of his youthfulness. Certainly, it will be clear to the House—not only from his speech today but from other contributions that he has made—that talent will out, and I hope that his role today is a sign that he will soon be joining those of his colleagues who form the country's Government.

The campaign that enabled the Government to construct the agenda in the Queen's Speech was interesting. I do not know how much other hon. Members enjoy election campaigns; I have been in politics for 23 years, and I am one of those masochists who find them quite good fun. I do not look forward to them, but, once they begin—especially in a constituency such as Shrewsbury and Atcham, which is an extremely pleasant place to represent and in which to campaign—they are certainly no trial. Indeed, they constitute a very enjoyable and informative process.

One of my main votes of thanks should go to the pollsters. I began the campaign expecting a reduced majority. Halfway through the campaign, I began to realise that my majority would increase, owing mainly to the distortion that the polling organisations were introducing. Experienced canvassers know from the look in the eye of the elector to whom they talk roughly what that voter's intentions are. They know how truthful the elector's response is when he answers the door: they know whether he will support their party or another one. I suspect that that is not an experience on which polling organisations can build; thus, in the final week of the campaign, those organisations were able to dominate the election with talk of hung Parliaments and proportional representation. That distorted the opportunity that we had as a nation to hammer out policies in that final week.

The greatest beneficiary was, I think, the Liberal Democrat party. The Liberal Democrats managed to get away with talking about proportional representation without anyone looking at their policies. I read their manifesto in great detail—especially page 39, which promised to do away with mortgage interest relief. That would have cost my constituents who have mortgages of £30,000 or more £68 a month. The Liberal Democrats were never prepared to debate that issue before the electorate with any confidence or courage. The same applies to their tax policy. If their policies had been known, they would probably have received an even greater hammering.

The result of the election is this: my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister continues in his post, and has been able to present the Government's agenda in the Gracious Speech. I think that he fought a very good campaign. It showed what a steady hand he has—a fact that was not doubted by those of us who saw him take over the Conservative party leadership at a time of crisis, not only for the Conservative party, but for a country that faced the unsure outcome of the Gulf conflict. The steadiness of the Prime Minister's hand was proven during that conflict. More important, the electorate understood—certainly this was the message that we received on the doorstep—that the Prime Minister was sincere.

When the Prime Minister talks about a classless society, I am never entirely sure how we are to aim for such a goal. At the outset of today's debate, my hon. Friend the Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames) was sitting on the Front Bench. I could not resist the temptation of picturing the new Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food—who is an extremely able man, as well as being very good company; I am sure that everyone will welcome him into the Government—in this context. I could not help but juxtapose his presence with the idea of a classless society. What the Prime Minister means by that in terms of the Conservative party is that class is irrelevant. Those who continue the class battle outside in the country or in the Chamber have got the message from the electorate because, for most of those who do not regard themselves as upper or middle class, class is irrelevant. Like the Prime Minister, I was brought up in a council house and went to a secondary modern school. In those circumstances the class war has no appeal. Most people are preoccupied with getting on with life.

Sadly, life is not equal. I would prefer to be thin and to have hair—my wife would wish the same—but I was born to put on weight and go bald. I regret that and it is not fair of God to have delivered in that way. However, life is not equal and we must come to terms with that and do the best we can.

When I stay in London I live in a one-bedroom flat in Pimlico. It is a nice flat in a nice area. It is not the fault of the greater Being, the Government, history or society that I stay in a one-bedroom flat while the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn), one of the House's great class warriors, lives in a nice mansion in Holland Park, or that the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould), perhaps soon to be the leader of the Labour party, has a rather nice country mansion. I do not begrudge them that but I wish that they would not begrudge it to others.

During the next four or five years the purpose of the Government is to get the balance right for the duty that our citizens have towards society through their taxes to provide for society's needs and for those who are less successful. The Government must also create oppportunity for individuals and their families. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister's commitment to that is unequivocal. He has shown that by deed. In the Gracious Speech the Government have put before us the proposition to extend council house sales through the rent-to-mortgage scheme. I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Hornchurch and those responsible at the Department of the Environment will consider the difficulty particularly facing older council tenants. Obtaining a mortgage is not

[Mr. Derek Conway]

difficult, but they have a problem in funding the insurance commitment that tends to go with the mortgage for those over the age of 50. I hope that as the House discusses the proposals that issue will be considered.

I must resist the temptation to comment on the industrial relations Bill. I am a former branch secretary of the Transport and General Workers Union. However, since my appointment as parliamentary private secretary to my hon. Friend the Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth) I am precluded from making comments on any legislation relating to the Department of Employment. I am not sure whether my appointment is to stop my hon. Friend from diluting his sensible and sound views, but the opportunity to learn from, and work with, one of the brightest Ministers in the Government who is also a friend was too good to resist. Also, I could not resist the opportunity to work with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment and her excellent team, which includes my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, West (Mr. McLoughlin) and my noble Friend the Viscount Ullswater in another place. It is a vibrant Department with challenging portfolios and I look forward to playing a small part in it.

In the Gracious Speech the Government announced their intention again to put before the House the Asylum Bill. I am glad that that is so because there are problems that will not go away. I regret the fact that the right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) described the Bill as racist. That is not an honourable term to apply to the Bill and its intention or practice. Lectures on honour are something that we cannot take and do not need from that right hon. Gentleman.

The Bill with which I shall have greatest difficulty is that covering the Maastricht treaty. My scepticism about the European cause is long standing. I was one of a handful of Members of Parliament to defy Mrs. Thatcher's three-line Whip when she was our Prime Minister to vote for the Single European Act. Many have since considered that the powers that we gave to Brussels through that Act and through the limited use of veto should not have been given and, with hindsight, would not be given were the Bill to come before us again.

One of the problems that I and many of my hon. Friends have with that Bill is the realisation that, although we may not like all that it contains, we cannot gainsay the fact that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister did a superb job in the negotiations. I believe that his success could not have been achieved by his predecessor. I hope that in our dealings with Europe he will ensure that the growth of the Brussels bureaucracy does not continue. Some of its ideas make some of the madder councils look positively prudent. I doubt whether the Bill will make us citizens of Europe.

I am pleased to be a subject of the Queen rather than a citizen of Europe. Those of us who voted for the United Kingdom to be part of the European Economic Community voted for just that—an area of free trade and free movement of capital, people and goods. The European Commission and too many others have lost sight of that.

Shrewsbury, which it is a privilege to represent, is a historic borough. Last year we celebrated the 150th anniversary of Benjamin Disraeli's time as a Member of Parliament. The borough was also the home of the first Parliament—the first occasion on which peers and commoners sat together. Therefore, it has a special link with the Chamber and what it tries to achieve. Like so many other areas, it prospers along with the nation.

Shrewsbury has a particular part to play in our heritage. We are listed as one of the 12 ancient boroughs with properties of particular historic importance to the country. Some, I hope not many, believe that the role of the new National Heritage Department and the proceeds of the new national lottery should be directed towards the arts. Although that is undoubtedly important, we need to ensure that we maintain the fabric of our historic buildings that play such an important part in making our country special. I hope that the new National Heritage Department will have a broad perspective on how to allocate its resources.

To the outsider Shrewsbury may seem to be an affluent town and, in many parts, it is. However, my constituency contains 120 villages as well as the county town. Many people perceive the farming community to be a well-off sector of society, particularly those who live in towns. However, those of us who represent farmers know only too well that they are running businesses on reduced incomes and that the demands upon them are ever greater. In the Finance (No. 2) Bill I look forward to ensuring that the inheritance tax proposals go ahead so that those who have invested in unlimited companies as small business men and in the farming community will be able to ensure that their families continue that business without the dead hand of the Inland Revenue pressing them too far. That is often one more pressure that many small businesses, of which there are many in Shrewsbury, find all too great. That was proved by the uniform business rate valuations which took place when capital values were unrealistically high and it is one of my fears for the council tax Bill, judgment on which is yet to come.

The Gracious Speech sets a good agenda for the Parliament. It contains many sensible Bills—16 in all. I believe that we shall make steady progress. Perhaps the Government's reduced majority will enable the legislature to exercise better and more effective control over the Executive, and that is no bad thing. All that will be underwritten by a strengthening of our economy with its reducing interest rates and reducing inflation rates so that we shall reach a point at which we are poised to lead Europe out of recession.

The fact that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister was returned to office—it was not expected by the media—was an acknowledgement by the country of his widely known and respected competence. His mission has not been to penalise success—that is what many of my constituents feared about the policies offered by Opposition parties—but to spread success and prosperity ever wider. In that he will have the full-hearted backing of the party and, I believe, the warm good wishes of the people of Shrewsbury and Atcham.

8.20 pm

Mr. Andrew Miller (Ellesmere Port and Neston): May I be the first new Member to congratulate you, Madam Deputy Speaker, on your appointment to that position? I rise for the first time in the House with a certain amount of trepidation—not because of the television cameras or

the members of the public in the Strangers Gallery but because of the comment of a small boy whom I was showing round this place last week.

I thank my predecessor, Mike Woodcock, for his work in the House, and wish him every success in his new work. He has just published a new book, which I have promised to buy when it is remaindered. I admit to already owning two books by Conservative Members of Parliament, so I shall not buy a third—at least until it has been remaindered.

I also thank Mike for organising the visit of St. Bernard's school last Monday, partly because he made the arrangements, which was helpful, and partly because the visit gave me an insight into the way in which this place works.

To find oneself on one's first day here showing round a party of inquisitive schoolchildren was indeed a challenge. I have also to thank my hon. Friend the Member for Warrington, North (Mr. Hoyle) for rescuing me from the mire on that occasion. I congratulate him on his skills as a well-informed and entertaining guide.

The small boy whom I mentioned told me with no equivocation that he did not like Conservatives. His view is in keeping with that of most of my constituents—I thought that he was a young man with excellent judgment. He went on to ask, "But why are they so noisy?" That was another perceptive and astute comment—hence my trepidation, but I am pleased to note that as only six Conservative Members are here tonight the noise will not cause me great concern.

Ellesmere Port and Neston is a constituency of great contrasts—from rich to poor, from urban to rural, from beautiful landscapes to industrial dereliction, and from environmental perfection to environmental concern. I shall concentrate on that last aspect, and contrast the peace and tranquillity of Ness gardens with the serious concerns about the protection of the environment round the vital petrochemical and related industries.

Ness gardens were the creation of a great socialist—A. K. Bulley who, incidentally, fought the then Rossendale constituency early this century on behalf of the women's suffrage movement. The gardens, which he and his daughter later gave to Liverpool university, now provide a place of great beauty and tranquillity for my constituents and for many thousands of visitors. They also provide the university with important research facilities on plants and their habitat. In this House my skills as a guide have yet to be developed, but I should happily share the experience of the beauty and tranquillity of Ness gardens with other Members of the House.

In contrast, one of the greatest petrochemical complexes in the British Isles is based at Stanlow, and stretches for several miles. It provides much-needed employment and wealth for the area, but inevitably it continually raises environmental issues of great importance to the local community. I will cite two examples.

Kemira is a company producing fertilisers. Why should it suffer from eastern bloc countries' dumping of products in this country? Those products are manufactured and transported according to standards that we in this country would not accept, and that is not a fair basis on which companies can operate. It is immensely damaging to the environment to allow such unfettered trade. Regrettably, I see little in the Gracious Speech to resolve that dilemma.

The prevalence of the free market seems to override environmental concerns. Is it right that toxic waste should be imported into my constituency for incineration? That waste is transported under inadequate trans-frontier shipment regulations. Unwanted waste comes from as far away as Australia. We do not want toxic waste from Australia or any other nation to be imported into this country for incineration. Again, I express my belief that issues of great importance to our nation, and to the planet as a whole, cannot be tackled by using market principles.

In conclusion, I ask Conservative Members to think again about the issues raised in the Gracious Speech—such as anti-union dogma and another privatisation charade. I ask them to drop those issues and tackle the real issues facing my constituents—jobs, housing, health, education, transport and, as I have described in detail, the environment.

I thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, for calling me, and I thank the House for doing me the courtesy of listening to me.

8.27 pm

Mr. John Hutton (Barrow and Furness): I apologise, Madam Deputy Speaker, for being a little late; I had to respond to a rather urgent call. I start my maiden speech by expressing my warm personal congratulations to you for being appointed to your present office. I am sure that I have the support of all right hon. and hon. Members in offering you our best wishes in executing your duties in the House. I am sure that you will distinguish the office that you hold.

Today is something of a double whammy—to coin a phrase that was extensively used during the election campaign—for me. It is not only the day on which I am making my maiden speech—all right hon. and hon. Members know that that is a day that one never forgets—but, as my hon. Friend the Member for Darlington (Mr. Milburn) has just told me, it is my birthday. I have something important for which to cherish this day, and cherish it I certainly shall.

I shall continue my maiden speech by conforming to a time-honoured tradition of the House and congratulate hon. Members on both sides of the House who have made their maiden speeches today. I had the pleasure of listening to my hon. Friend the Member for Thurrock (Mr. Mackinlay), who made a distinguished and excellent speech, and to my hon. Friend the Member for Warrington, South (Mr. Hall), who also made an impressive maiden speech. Unfortunately, I missed the maiden speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Ellesmere Port and Neston (Mr. Miller), but I look forward to hearing him speak in the Chamber on many other occasions.

I gladly comply with another tradition of the House in acknowledging the work of my predecessor in the constituency of Barrow and Furness—Cecil Franks. It is beyond dispute and doubt that Cecil Franks took a particular interest in and paid particular attention to the affairs of the constituency. He was and is a courteous and civilised man who showed great dignity and good humour in his defeat on 9 April. Sadly for him, he is now experiencing some of the difficulties caused by the sudden loss of employment: he shares that experience with far too many of my constituents. I wish him well for the future in his new career outside the House.

I express my admiration and respect for the previous Labour Member for my constituency, Albert Booth. He

[Mr. John Hutton]

was a fine Member of Parliament who not only rose to high Cabinet office, where he distinguished himself with rare excellence, but who is fondly remembered in my constituency for his attention to the personal problems of my constituents. Without doubt he will be a tough act to follow on both counts, but I look forward to the challenge of representing my constituents in the House.

Barrow and Furness is a great industrial constituency. Along with other towns and cities of northern Britain, it was once famous for being the workshop of the world. We are the home of Vickers Shipbuilding and Engineering Ltd. which is, without doubt, the world leader in the design and construction of nuclear submarines. VSEL is also a magnificent centre of engineering excellence.

The constituency is also host to many other leading industrial concerns such as Glaxo chemicals at Ulverston and Scotts, the paper manufacturers, in Barrow. There are many other small and medium-sized companies in the constituency which are recognised leaders in their fields. I think especially of Oxley's Developments in Ulverston, Camille Simon in Barrow, and Furness Engineering and Technology Ltd., to name just a few. I am proud to say that the list is long and it provides Barrow and Furness with one of the most skilled and highly trained industrial work forces to be found anywhere in Britain.

Barrow and Furness is also a very beautiful constituency which nestles at the foot of the Lake District, with a wonderful coastline and rugged hills. However, the real asset of my constituency is its people. They are a warm and generous community, and that is especially true of the people of Hindpool where I lived during the general election campaign. They made me and my family extremely welcome, which is an experience I will never forget.

The work force of VSEL have served the nation's interests with great distinction in both war and peace for many generations. We have built up a rare and precious collection of skills and talents, an asset for Britain which is far too important to see frittered away. Sadly, thousands of my constituents are now being forced to live and work under the constant threat of losing their jobs.

More than 5,000 jobs have been lost at VSEL in the past two years and thousands more have been lost outside VSEL. My constituents deserve better treatment. We look to the Government especially to take some of the urgent measures which will help us to get through the next few difficult years. Unless the Government act quickly and decisively, they will experience and be responsible for an industrial catastrophe which will rip the guts out of what is left of the British heavy engineering industry. As we are a manufacturing nation with a proud history of shipbuilding and marine engineering, it is incumbent on the Government to act without delay to rescue my industrial constituency from the catastrophe that I predict.

There are three urgent measures which we look to the Government to act on. Barrow and Furness urgently needs assisted area status and we call on the Government to redraw the maps of assisted area status which have not been changed for almost nine years. It is imperative that the Government look again at the assisted area status maps. My constituency needs a healthier climate for business activity, and such a measure would make a decisive contribution to securing that.

We also urgently need improved transport and communication links with the rest of Britain. I am thinking especially of the A590 and the Furness line. On looking at the Gracious Speech this morning, I and many of my constituents were very concerned about the threat to the Furness line posed by the privatisation of British Rail. We remain to be convinced that privatisation will improve the passenger services to my constituency. Indeed, we are deeply suspicious that the exact opposite will result.

Perhaps most importantly, the VSEL yards in Barrow urgently need support, new work and new orders. We especially want—and ask—the Government to think carefully about accelerating the ordering of the batch 2 hunter-killer submarines. During the lifetime of this Parliament and I hope, with the support of my electorate, beyond the lifetime of this Parliament, I will continue to press the Government on all three counts.

The Government's other policies—on health and education, for example—continue to have a negative impact on the lives of my constituents. Many schools in my constituency are struggling to make ends meet under the local management of schools regime created by the Government. It is becoming increasingly difficult for many schools in my constituency to balance the books, to pay the staff, to maintain the fabric of the buildings, and to deliver the national curriculum which the Government have created. The one simple measure which many of us wanted to see in the Government's legislative programme was a commitment that they would revive the LMS scheme so that the actual salary costs of teachers, as opposed to a notional average, formed a part of the budgetary element. In my constituency, and, I suspect, in many other constituencies where there are schools with an established staff who have reached the top or near the top of the salary scale, it is becoming increasingly difficult for schools to manage effectively the budgets that they have been given.

The Gracious Speech appears to me and to many of my right hon. and hon. Friends to be more an attempt to satisfy the ideological fixations of various sections of the Conservative party than a serious attempt to address the economic and social difficulties facing Britain in the 1990s. Many of my constituents will be disappointed, but probably not surprised, by the contents of the Gracious Speech. In particular, there is nothing in it which holds out the prospect of an early end to the years of unemployment which started in my constituency with the publication of the defence review, "Options for Change".

There is nothing in the Gracious Speech which offers the hope, not only to my constituency but to many others that are dependent on defence-related work, that the Government are seriously addressing the problems faced by such communities. We know, understand and welcome the Government's commitment to review and reconsider Britain's defensive posture and capabilities, but we do not understand the Government's desire, which we condemn, to leave those communities to face the full brunt of market forces.

Communities such as mine, which have worked consistently for the Government for almost 30 years—all the work we have had in shipbuilding and engineering has been defence-related—need the assistance of the Government to make the necessary changes. We need the Government to understand that we cannot simply make that change on our own. If my constituents are left to face the full force of market forces, there will be carnage in my constituency. The Government must recognise and take

responsibility for that. My constituents will not forgive the Government if they continue to sit on their hands and to do nothing.

The one question I put to Conservative Members is to ask what kind of management of our economy we have if the Government are prepared to sit on their hands while skilled men and women in Barrow and Furness are turned on to the dole. My response to the question is simply this: a Government who are prepared to see that happen are a Government who are taking the British economy in the wrong direction. We need the skills of my constituents. We need the contribution that they can make to a revitalised British engineering industry. Unfortunately, however, that commitment is lacking on the Government's part.

Let me end my maiden speech by recalling a conversation that I had recently with one of my constituents, a man in his late nineties, who, on 9 April, had made the particularly painful trip to the polling station to vote in person. He had the option of voting by proxy but he chose to vote himself. My constituent reminded me of the very first Labour Member of Parliament elected to represent Barrow. Charles Duncan was elected to the House in 1906. It gives me a measure of pride in my constituents to think that mine was among the first constituencies in Britain to return a Labour Member of Parliament. When Charles Duncan was elected, there were only 29 Members on the Labour Benches. In that respect, my constituents were some years ahead of many of those now so ably represented by my right hon. and hon. Friends.

The point of my recollection of that conversation is this. My elderly constituent stopped me in Dalton road in Barrow and told me how proud he was that, nearly 90 years later, Barrow had elected a socialist—a new Labour Member—to represent it in this House. My constituent had lived to see the day, and I have the privilege of being that Labour Member of Parliament. As all right hon. and hon. Members know, it is a rare and great honour to be in the House. For me, it is an even greater honour to represent the people of Barrow and Furness, and I look forward to speaking up for them in the House in the years that lie ahead.

8.42 pm

Mr. Paul Tyler (Cornwall, North): May I be the first Liberal Democrat Member to congratulate you, Madam Deputy Speaker, on your elevation to your new post. I hope that I shall be forgiven by other right hon. and hon. Members from the south-west for congratulating you on your new position on behalf of the south-west. Now that we have no Minister representing a constituency west of Bristol, we must look to you as our principal guide and mentor, and I hope that you will ensure that those from the south-west—the wild west—are given the opportunity to speak. I hope that we shall have the opportunity to catch your eye on future occasions.

I have heard six excellent maiden speeches in today's debate. The last one—from the hon. Member for Barrow and Furness (Mr. Hutton)—was particularly adroit and adept. It was also succinct—an especially admirable virtue to those of us who have been waiting to speak. The hon. Gentleman gave particular emphasis to employment—a matter to which I should like to return—and no doubt the points that he made about his constituents' employment difficulties would be echoed in many hon. Members' constituencies.

It is 18 years since I made my maiden speech from this Bench. It was a long time ago, and a number of right hon. and hon. Members were not even Members of the House at that stage. I well remember the difficulty that I experienced in catching the eye of the Deputy Speaker on that occasion, waiting throughout a long debate and trying to make the right speech for the occasion. Today, we have been admirably well served by the six hon. Members who have broken the ice.

When I made my speech all those years ago, I had the misfortune to be serving in one of the shortest Sessions of Parliament and to have one of the most minuscule majorities—a majority of only nine. I hope that, in this Parliament, I shall have improved on both. Several changes have taken place. Then, I represented the now defunct constituency of Bodmin. I now represent the constituency of Cornwall, North, which you, Madam Deputy Speaker, know well. It is a glorious constituency renowned for the character both of its people and of its places. It has been the popular holiday haunt of many famous Members of Parliament, including one very distinguished former Member of the House, the previous Prime Minister, who I suppose is now caught in limbo somewhere between this House and the other place, although I forget how we properly describe the purgatory between the two.

Sadly, when I spoke on that occasion 18 years ago, the situation was rather more propitious than it is today. As hon. Members on both sides of the House have remarked, the word "employment"—or "unemployment"—does not appear in the Gracious Speech. There are many hon. Members on both sides of the House who, while accepting the special requirements of inner cities, to which the Prime Minister referred in his speech, and which will be reflected in and addressed by the urban regeneration agency, are nevertheless concerned that concentration on the problems of inner cities may mean that insufficient attention is paid to the deep-seated economic problems of the more rural areas of England, Wales, Scotland and Cornwall. I suggest that the hidden needs of many of those communities, rarely as newsworthy as those of the inner cities, also deserve special attention.

I will illustrate that point by referring to some of the circumstances which have changed since, as a very new Member of Parliament, I made my maiden speech just over 18 years ago. I referred then to housing waiting lists and to the homeless in my constituency. Today, repossessions stand at 16 times their 1974 level. In Devon and Cornwall there are more families in bed-and-breakfast accommodation than ever before, and the waiting lists for rented accommodation are simply impossible. Another change is that the mainstay of the local rural economy—the small family farm consisting mostly of livestock—has worse income levels today than it did before the war. That is not a political point—it is a point that has been intelligently and well argued by the special unit at Exeter university.

Thirdly, small businesses, which in comparative terms were thriving those years ago, are now in considerable difficulties. The hon. Member for Shrewsbury and Atcham (Mr. Conway) referred to the difficulty with the uniform business rate. We very much regret that the uniform business rate has not been pegged at last year's level and is still edging its way up. In parts of Cornwall, 50 per cent.

[Mr. Paul Tyler]

of holiday businesses are up for sale. That represents a vote of no confidence in what for them has been the last straw—the level and valuation level of the uniform business rate.

As I said, the starkest indicator of change in those 18 years has been the change in the employment pattern. This afternoon I asked the Library to give me the figures for North Cornwall 18 years ago and today. In 1974, a total of 800 people were on the unemployment register—2·5 per cent. of the population. That figure has risen more than sevenfold, to 5,621—nearly 17 per cent. of the total work force in the North Cornwall constituency. More than 3,900 men, or 23 per cent., and 1,600 women, or 9 per cent., are unemployed. Our problem is comparable with some of the worst problems of the inner cities to which the Prime Minister referred. That is a rise of more than 50 per cent. in the last six months, seasonally adjusted. In some journey-to-work areas in the constituency, up to one in three employable men are now without a job. Many of them are young and many of them are long-term unemployed. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) said, rural areas are suffering deprivation—often hidden but nevertheless real—in terms of public services and opportunities for their citizens. While we recognise the case and welcome the special attention for the inner cities that will be effected by the new agency, we believe that in the far-flung areas of Britain which require special attention because of deep-seated economic problems and structural changes in the employment pattern we must have regionally based development agencies.

We take some comfort from the fact that the new Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, who served his political apprenticeship close to your constituency, Madam Deputy Speaker, and to mine, is well known to be enthusiastic for the concept of locally generated development agencies. We hope that he will carry forward that enthusiasm in his new Department and use it to set up agencies that will be effective in turning the tide of unemployment in areas such as yours, Madam Deputy Speaker, and mine.

We must have areas with integrity and clear identities and with clear similarities of economic problems, opportunities and characteristics. They must have cohesion and a manageable size. They must also have a sense of identity. I hope that some guidance may be provided by the existing agency, the Rural Development Commission, which I had the privilege and pleasure to advise when I was not a Member of this place. The new agency must be deeply rooted in the local community.

My right hon. and hon. Friends and I welcome the tone of constructive intervention which we believe may well be personified in the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. That is surely a far cry from the high tide and heyday of high Thatcherism. We want to ensure that the tone which has crept into ministerial voices is now carried through into action. Words are not enough.

8.51 pm

Mr. David Hanson (Delyn): I add my congratulations to you, Madam Deputy Speaker, on your appointment today. I also congratulate the hon. Member for Cornwall, North (Mr. Tyler) on his maiden speech. It must be a great pleasure for him to return to this place after serving for a brief time in the 1974 Parliament, and a great honour and pleasure to represent the people of Cornwall, North in this Parliament.

I congratulate also my hon. Friends the Members for Barrow and Furness (Mr. Hutton), for Ellesmere Port and Neston (Mr. Miller) and for Warrington, South (Mr. Hall) on their contributions. It was a particular pleasure to listen to my hon. Friend the Member for Ellesmere Port and Neston because when I fought the constituency of Eddisbury in the 1983 general election my hon. Friend was then the constituency chair. We go back rather a long way, as do my hon. Friend the Member for Warrington, South and I. Twelve years ago we sat in the Strangers Gallery and watched the proceedings and dreamed of the day when we would represent the Labour party in Parliament, though perhaps in more auspicious circumstances under a Labour Government. Nevertheless, we are proud to be here today.

I have the honour and privilege to be the first Labour Member for Delyn. It is a particular pleasure and honour to represent the people of Delyn. My hon. Friend the Member for Thurrock (Mr. Mackinlay) referred to the five general elections that he fought. I did not have to suffer that ordeal as I have fought only three general elections, although I did fight one Euro-election which was an ordeal times nine. It is a great pleasure to be here today to speak for the people of Delyn, to put forward their strongly held views and to argue the case for Labour party policies in this forthcoming Parliament.

In becoming Member for Delyn, I want to thank my constituents and the many Labour party workers and supporters in Delyn who worked in this election and in previous general elections to return a Labour Member for Delyn. In 1983, Labour secured 14,000 votes in Delyn. In 1987, we secured 20,000 votes. Thanks to the work of the people in Delyn and the many organisations that have supported Labour candidates in the constituency over the years, on 9 April we secured 25,000 votes and a Labour gain for the first time in that constituency.

I would not be standing here as Member for Delyn without the support of my family—my wife Margaret who married a Labour candidate for Delyn constituency, my children Tom, Amy and Alys who, not necessarily of their choice, were born into the political history of the constituency of Delyn—and of my employers. Until last Thursday I worked as a director of RESOLV, the society for the prevention of solvent and volatile substance abuse. That organisation was extremely generous in supporting my candidature as a Member of this place. I hope to repay that by working with my hon. Friend the Member for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney) and the hon. Member for Tynemouth (Mr. Trotter) and the all-party group on solvent issues to ensure that another voice is added to support action to stop the tragedy of the deaths of 149 young people every year as a result of solvent and volatile substance misuse.

My constituency is in north-east Wales. It is a proud area. The name of the constituency derives from the river Dee and the river Alyn which serve my constituency. My constituency is the gateway to many of the beauties of north Wales for many travellers from elsewhere in the United Kingdom. Flint, with its historic castle which was built to keep out the English invaders, is the main town at the south end of my constituency. It is a proud and closely knit town which supports many industries and is enjoying great regeneration. It was hit hard by the appalling job

losses at Shotton steelworks, Courtaulds and many other factories during the recession in the early 1980s. It faces hard times now, but with the support of positive action from the Labour party and the House, it will see those times through.

My constituency includes the towns of Holywell and Bagillt. It stretches to the coastal resort of Prestatyn where many people from Liverpool, the city of my birth, have enjoyed holidays and good days out. Mold, the county town of Clwyd, provides many local government jobs. When the Gracious Speech is digested, I shall be interested to see how local government will fare under the Government's future plans. I am extremely worried about how the Government will take forward plans to maintain local government, to develop it and to ensure that its boundaries reflect the needs of local people and the wishes of our communities and that it delivers effective services.

There are also many mining villages in my constituency such as Ffynnongroew, Pennyffordd and Gronant, which support the Point of Ayr colliery. Many beautiful and prosperous villages that form part of the hinterland of Delyn constituency have prospered under the Government who, I hope, in future will secure support for the many people in my constituency who have not prospered after 13 years of Conservative government.

I am fortunate to represent a seat which is a Labour gain. I fought the then hon. Member for Delyn—Mr. Keith Raffan, who retired before the general election—in the previous general election and it would be remiss of me not to mention the good work that he has done for Delyn constituency. We never agreed on many political points, if any at all, but during the six years in which I shadowed him as the Labour candidate, I found him to be a hardworking constituency Member who reflected the views of his party most vociferously in the Chamber and in the constituency and who served the people of Delyn constituency well. He has now gone to pastures new. On behalf of everybody in Delyn, I wish him well in his new job and for the future.

It would be remiss not to mention also the two Members of Parliament who are held in great esteem in my constituency and who served the constituency before the boundary reorganisation in 1983. My hon. Friend the Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) is particularly well respected and well remembered in my constituency, having served as the hon. Member for Flint, East, which covers half of my constituency, for 13 years before the boundary reorganisation. There is not a place in Delyn where my hon. Friend the Member for Alyn and Deeside is not fondly remembered, fondly known, recognised and applauded.

For many years, the hon. Member for the Flint, West part of my constituency was Sir Anthony Meyer, who recently retired from the House. He distinguished himself by being an extremely good constituency Member of Parliament and a man of particular courage. It certainly takes courage to stand for election when one's party does not support one and to say things that, one year later, many people are only too glad to vote for. I pay tribute to him for the courage that he showed. When the knives are out and when one's back is in the way, one must be extremely careful. Sir Anthony Meyer, who represented the northern parts of my constituency and the town of Mold, deserves the congratulations of the House on his service to his constituents.

The Gracious Speech has much in it that we can appreciate and look to for the future and about which I shall be willing to learn more. However, there is much in it which I fundamentally oppose and about which I have grave concern for my constituents and the future of major services and industries in my constituency. I mention in particular the proposal to privatise British Coal. My constituents who work at the Point of Ayr colliery in my constituency will oppose that proposal. The many people for whom the colliery provides employment in the hinterland of the Point of Ayr colliery will oppose that proposal. Many people throughout the constituency who have no involvement with the coal industry will oppose that proposal. Point of Ayr is fundamental to future employment in the northern part of my constituency. The Rothschild report, which was published in leaked form before the election, indicates quite clearly that under a privatised British Coal the Point of Ayr colliery would be no more. When the opportunity arises, I shall fight that Bill tooth and nail in the House and elsewhere to make sure that the people of my constituency get a fair deal.

It is not a matter of dogma—it is a matter of common sense. We are not talking about, and nor are people in my constituency necessarily concerned about, the ownership of British Coal. The dogma on that matter comes from the Government. We are concerned about good management, investment in the coal industry, investment in decent working conditions for the people who work in that pit, productivity, and support for those people to produce coal at effective, cheap prices. In the coming months, there will be arguments about ownership and profitability. As I have said, I have three children under five. What is profitable today will not necessarily be profitable in future. We have valuable reserves now, but in the future my children and grandchildren will need resources which such a Bill will deny people, allowing them to consider only the profit motive in the coal industry.

I also heard with dismay about the involvement of the private sector in British Rail. In my constituency, there is a great need for further investment in Flint and Prestatyn railway stations and, as my colleagues who represent constituencies in Wales and Cheshire know, the improvements in the Crewe-Holyhead railway link. Privatisation and private sector involvement in British Rail will do nothing to support the improvement of services in my constituency. They will do nothing to invest in the future of rail links to my constituency, and nothing whatsoever to ensure the security of viable, important transport links to Flint and Prestatyn stations. I will oppose such a measure when the opportunity arises.

Like my hon. Friends, I was disappointed at what was not in the Gracious Speech. On 9 April, in Wales, 27 Labour Members of Parliament were elected, compared with six Conservatives, four Welsh nationalists and one Liberal Democrat. I make no quibble about being part of the United Kingdom, because we are rightfully part of the United Kingdom. However, if Conservative Members wish to impose their policies on the people of Wales, they must listen to hon. Members who were elected to represent the Welsh people and who have valid points of view to put forward.

The Welsh Office currently spends more than £6,000 million per year. There are 42 quangos throughout Wales dealing with every aspect of public life in our community. There are thousands upon thousands of investments by the Government in Wales. Yet there are only three Ministers,

[Mr. David Hanson]

one of whom does not even represent a seat in Wales. They spend and invest that resource on behalf of the people of that community.

As the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) said, 70 per cent. of the people of Wales did not vote for the Government. I do not ask that you discard your programme. It is your right to implement it. I ask that you simply——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. I remind the hon. Member that he must address the Chair.

Mr. Hanson: Of course, Madam Deputy Speaker. It is a learner's mistake. I shall come back in due course and learn by experience.

Conservative Members have the mandate to run the United Kingdom and put forward their policies in the United Kingdom, but I trust that they will listen closely to those of us who have won seats in Wales and represent the people of Wales. I hope that they will introduce policies for Wales.

I was also strongly disappointed to see no action proposed in the Queen's Speech on the minimum wage, which a Labour Government would have introduced had we been elected on 9 April. It is not a lot to ask that people in my constituency should earn £3·40 per hour. Many people in my area, particularly in Flint, Holywell, Bagillt and Greenfield, earn much less than £3·40 per hour. I hoped that the Government would see fit to introduce legislation to begin to abolish low pay and fall into line with our Community partners, who believe that a minimum wage is essential and valuable.

In the coming months many points will come before the House on which I shall wish to speak. I am proud to be the Labour Member of Parliament for the Delyn constituency and proud to make my maiden speech here today in front of colleagues whom I have known for many years. I am proud to represent the people of my constituency. The Gracious Speech contains proposals which we shall oppose fundamentally and which will affect my constituency drastically. I look forward to the opportunity to vote against them and to the day when we shall sit on the Government Benches introducing the policies on which I was elected on 9 April.

9.6 pm

Mr. David Amess (Basildon): I am truly grateful to have the opportunity to make a speech which some weeks ago people forecast that I would not be in a position to make. But may I first congratulate you, Madam Deputy Speaker, on your appointment. I am sure that I speak on behalf of hon. Members on both sides of the House in saying that we are delighted at your appointment and we wish you well in the next five years.

I congratulate the hon. Members for Ellesmere Port and Neston (Mr. Miller), for Barrow and Furness (Mr. Hutton), for Delyn (Mr. Hanson) and, although it was not his maiden speech, for Cornwall, North (Mr. Tyler). I listened carefully to those speeches and I congratulate all those hon. Members on their eloquence, the passion with which they spoke, their concern for their constituents and the great understanding in a short space of time of their constituencies. All I can say is that the 1992 intake is obviously of a high calibre. Although politically I have nothing in common with Opposition Members, I wish them well in the future. On behalf of Conservative Members, I thank them for their gracious and generous tributes to my hon. Friends whom they defeated.

We lost 44 Members of Parliament. As Opposition Members would expect me to say, I held each and every one of them in high regard. It will be remembered and noted that Opposition Members were so generous in their speeches. In particular, I shall miss my friend, Ken Hargreaves, who was the Member for Hyndburn. He was well respected in the House. One could not find a more hard-working Member of Parliament than Ken Hargreaves. He will be truly missed.

Much has been said about the constituency of Basildon. Some have described it as a remarkable win. That is certainly not the case. It was my good fortune that mine was the first marginal seat result to be shown on television. I have received in my postbag letters not only from within the United Kingdom but from all over the world. There were many more remarkable Tory victories than mine.

My victory is due to the tremendous campaign in my constituency. I was supported by Lady Emily Blatch, our former colleagues Cecil Parkinson and Norman Tebbit, my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary, my hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, South (Mr. Yeo) the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health, my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury, my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Social Security, the former Prime Minister, Mrs. Margaret Thatcher, and, to complete a winning team, Henry Cooper. I realise that I am straying somewhat from the main content of the Gracious Speech, but I shall come to that shortly.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Very shortly.

Mr. Amess: Very shortly, Madam Deputy Speaker.

I am grateful to each and every one of those who campaigned in my constituency. I am also grateful to the Leader of the House of Commons, and my right hon. Friend the Member for Southend, West (Mr. Channon), my hon. Friends the Members for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) and for Rochford (Dr. Clark), Sir Bernard Braine and my hon. Friends the Members for Chelmsford (Mr. Burns) and for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman), all of whom brought teams over to help me.

There is no secret about how we won the seat in Basildon. I campaigned on the contents of the Gracious Speech that we heard today, all of which was contained in our election manifesto, "The Best Future for Britain". I campaigned on my record as a constituency Member for the past nine years and on the Government's record. On both counts, my constituents decided to send me back to Westminster and our right hon. Friend the Prime Minister to Downing street, once again to form a Conservative Government. That is how we won locally and nationally.

In going through the Gracious Speech, I was particularly drawn to the sentence that says:

"Britain's minimum nuclear deterrent will be maintained."

How often we listened to lectures from Opposition Members about the defence of this country. At one time, they were against us defending ourselves, and the next minute they wanted us to defend ourselves.

GEC Avionics was in my constituency. Naturally we were glad when perestroika and glasnost led to eastern bloc countries being freed to enjoy democracy, but, as we said time and again, there was a real downside to that for

those of us with defence establishments in our constituencies. Therefore, it was a real disgrace when during the general election Conservatives were lectured about job losses in those defence establishments. We were the ones who warned about that at the time. All along we said what the downside would be. I am delighted that we have reaffirmed in the Gracious Speech that we shall maintain strong defences because at the moment the world is less certain than it has ever been.

In the Gracious Speech, we mention that we shall lay before Parliament the treaty of Maastricht and introduce a Bill to implement it. I was delighted with the agreement that our right hon. Friend the Prime Minister brought back from Maastricht. I believe, and I know that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister shares my view, that this Parliament is sovereign and it is fundamental that it should retain its powers of taxation. It is our privilege to have the presidency of the Community in July and I hope that my right hon. Friends the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary will ensure that we have a strong voice in the next six months.

The Government have said all along that it is essential to retain low inflation and low interest rates. As a result of our membership of the European exchange rate mechanism, those twin goals could be won for ever, so that we shall no longer have to suffer the cyclical development of boom and recession. I was delighted at the interest rate cut that we announced yesterday.

The Gracious Speech also says that the Government

"are committed to increasing the role of the railways in meeting the country's transport needs. Legislation will be introduced to enable the private sector to operate rail services."

The House has sometimes heard my hon. Friends and me talk about the Fenchurch Street line. About six months ago we invited the chairman of British Rail to travel with us on that line because the service is disgraceful. My long-suffering constituents have faith that the Government will ensure that, if the management of British Rail cannot provide a good service to the three railway stations in my constituency—Basildon, Pitsea and Laindon—they will jolly well give the opportunity to others to see whether they can better manage that service. I am delighted that we are now joined by my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House, a fellow Essex Member who shares my concern about the Fenchurch Street line.

I am also delighted that the Gracious Speech says that

"Action will be taken to combat crime and promote law and order."

As I said a few months ago, I was delighted that one of the few constituencies to see a fall in crime over the past year was Basildon. It is my great pleasure to congratulate our local police and the community on their good work in the past year, which has resulted in that reduction of crime.

I was disappointed in the remarks by the Leader of the Opposition, who was most disparaging about the excellent work done by the former Home Secretary, my right hon. Friend the Member for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker), on the national lottery. It is a splendid scheme, welcomed throughout the country, and I have no doubt that it will be a great success. I gently warn the Government that Basildon will put in a bid to have the national headquarters in our town. I hope that we shall have national draws on television, with someone like Joan Collins to pull the winning ticket out of the hat.

The Gracious Speech also says that the

"Government will continue to improve the quality of the national health service and community care and their responsiveness to patients' needs."

How sad that, throughout the four weeks of the general election campaign, the Opposition Front Bench spokesmen sought to run down the national health service. We shall never forget their disgraceful party political broadcast. We have an excellent health service, particularly in Basildon. On 1 April, our hospital achieved trust status and the men and women who work there look forward to the successes that we shall enjoy in health care.

I note the sentence stating:

"A Bill will be presented to promote the Welsh language."

Of course, we Conservatives welcome and support that, but I am gently beginning to wonder if it might not be a good idea to promote the English language.

Just before the Prime Minister decided to hold the general election, I noticed a tendency among Opposition Members. When Conservative Members representing marginal constituencies rose to make speeches in the Chamber, some Opposition Members waved their arms, said "Goodbye" and mentioned that there would be a Labour gain. I make no complaint as I was not subjected to that, but I wonder if I may be given the opportunity, on behalf of my colleagues with marginal constituencies who were re-elected, to say, "Hello, it's nice to be back."

I look forward to the next five years in the knowledge that my constituents decided that their best future would be to keep a Conservative Government and a Conservative Member of Parliament for Basildon. I am immodest enough to say that, on both counts, I believe that they have made the right decision.

Debate adjourned.—[Mr. Arbuthnot.]

Debate to be resumed tomorrow.

Severn Bridge (Toll Charges)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Arbuthnot.]*

9.21 pm

Mr. Roy Hughes (Newport, East): I take this opportunity to congratulate you, Madam Deputy Speaker, on your appointment. From my experience in the House, I know that it is well deserved.

I am glad to have the opportunity on the first day of the new Parliament to raise the subject of toll charges on the Severn bridge. Standing Order No. 20, which deals with requests for emergency debates, refers to

"the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration".

Tonight's debate is in the same category.

The vast majority of the people of Wales live on the narrow coastal strip stretching from Carmarthen to Chepstow. The Severn bridge serves that district and is the main access point for traffic travelling in and out of Wales. It was opened in September 1966 by Her Majesty the Queen and was built at a cost of £8 million, which was a charge on the Consolidated Fund—no bank charges were involved.

That figure of £8 million was a flea bite compared with the overall level of public expenditure, but it has caused problems. It has been repaid many times over in toll charges. I understand that, up to 25 April, £113·4 million had been collected in tolls. However, the taxpayer, who initially paid for the bridge, is being fleeced and is having to pay interest charges on the money provided. To compound that farce and add insult to injury, the Government handed over the bridge to a French-American backed consortium. It was also given the power and authority to build a second bridge, under the Severn Bridges Act 1991. I understand that the new bridge will cost about £300 million. Further powers under the Act were given to enable tolls to be collected for up to 35 years, and over the next 30 years the consortium is expected to collect at least £1 billion. To my simple mind, it seems that the consortium is being given a licence to print money.

Since the bridge was opened in 1966, traffic flows have increased dramatically. In the first year of its operation the average daily flow was 15,600 vehicles—5·7 million a year. Now, about 19 million vehicles a year use the bridge, which is 52,000 a day. These figures seem to illustrate that the forecasts by the Department of Transport were way out.

This massive increase in traffic had a detrimental effect on the structure of the bridge. In November 1983, I revealed to the House the contents of what had been until then a secret report from an independent firm of consultants; it showed that there was serious cause for concern about the state of the bridge. The Government were forced into a programme of repairs and strengthening. According to the Department of Transport, in the period to September 1991, that programme had cost £83 million, but we were originally told by the same Department that the work would cost just over £30 million. There seems to be a question mark over the forecasting accuracy of the Department of Transport—the same Department whose spokesman recently advised us that

"there is no evidence that tolls cause any significant damage to the Welsh economy."

He could have fooled some of us.

The cost of the repair work was added to the original cost of the bridge. The interest charges were added and the overall debt spiralled. On 25 April, when the handover took place, the debt stood at £125·2 million. So the bridge cost £8 million, £113·4 million was collected in tolls, and the debt left over is £125·2 million. That is farcical.

In the year 1990-91, road users paid £19 billion in vehicle and fuel taxes, which I am reliably informed represents 12 per cent. of all tax revenue. Less than 24 per cent. of that £19 billion is spent on roads. With all this revenue coming into the Exchequer, surely a tiny portion could have been used to pay for the strengthening work on the Severn bridge—the principal access point of Wales. After all, the bridge is merely a two-mile stretch of the M4. Some 10 miles away, the bridge on the M5 serving Avonmouth has no tolls. One does not have to be a racist to suggest that the Government are prejudiced against Wales.

Given the huge amount of £19 billion accruing to the Exchequer from motor taxation, why should there be tolls on this short stretch of motorway leading into Wales? Wales has tremendous economic problems and heavy unemployment. The coal industry has been virtually wiped out and there have been massive redundancies and closures in the steel industry. There is a basic need to attract new industry, and I acknowledge that there has been a measure of success, but much more is needed. Despite all those difficulties, this "caring" Government have chosen to place a huge tax burden on our principal traffic network.

The new French-American backed consortium took control on Sunday 26 April and the following morning there was absolute chaos on the bridge. I spent an hour at the toll booth and saw things at first hand and spoke to drivers who had been escorted off the bridge because, coinciding with the takeover, there was a massive increase in toll charges.

Perhaps it is symbolic that the consortium has changed the tolling arrangements so that motorists are penalised for coming into Wales. Cars now pay £2·80, small vans pay £5·60 and lorries and buses pay £8·40. It is reckoned that our supermarkets need to be serviced twice a day. Close to the bridge there is a major Tesco distribution centre. Surely the £8·40 toll charge will be reflected in prices in the store. The same applies to buses. People are encouraged to use public transport, but the massive toll charges will undoubtedly increase fares.

On the morning of 27 April there was a large police presence on the bridge. I have written to the chief constables of both Avon and Gwent asking who paid for that operation. The police did a good job, but, bearing in mind the ever-escalating crime rate, surely police time could be better spent than on a bridge owned by a foreign backed consortium assisting in the process of extracting tolls from increasingly alienated motorists. Our police deserve better than that.

Many vehicles had to be escorted off the bridge because their drivers were not carrying sufficient money to pay the increased charges. Some positively refused to pay. A hostile atmosphere was generated. There was a particular grievance over small vans which previously paid the same toll as a car but were now being made to pay the second category of £5·60, the same as the charge for a minibus. That must be especially damaging to one-man businesses. What a burden those tolls must be on, say, a plumber or a small builder who may need to cross the bridge several

times a day. Yet these tolls have essentially been imposed by a Government who claim to be the champion of small business.

I spoke to drivers who had handfuls of vouchers that had been issued previously by Avon county council. The vouchers were no longer valid and the drivers were escorted off the bridge by the police. There were even instances of drivers who were 10p short of toll charges being turned away. How ridiculous can we get? In the days of the Berlin wall it must have been easier to cross from East Germany to the west.

The greed of the consortium seems to know no bounds. I shall give two examples, the first of which is phone charges. For many years crossing the Severn bridge has been fraught with difficulties, and I am well aware that many hon. Members have had personal experience. Motorists tended to phone to check on the situation at the bridge before embarking on their journey. That applied to business appointments or to a husband or wife waiting at home. They paid as little as 10p for recorded information. The new service introduced by the consortium costs 28p a minute between 8 am and 6 pm. The cost is £2·76 for the full message between those times and £2·07 at other times. The new owners' share of income from telephone calls—as many as 5,000 motorists a day can use the system—will range up to £1,000 a day. Did the Government agree to this extortion beforehand?

One constituent, Mr. Francis, of The Mooring in Newport, asks specifically to whose coffers the money will go. The answer is pretty clear.

Secondly, there are postal charges for pre-paid toll tickets. The members of the consortium, these latter-day highway robbers, are charging £2·35 for this service. It was previously provided free of charge by Avon county council. Mr. M. A. Boden, the managing director of a large Ford dealership in Chepstow, is sorely grieved. In a letter addressed to me of 30 April he wrote:

"We attempted to buy advance tickets. In the past we applied for these from Avon County Council and paid by cheque for the book of tickets. Our driver presented herself at the Advance Ticket Unit today with a company cheque to purchase books for our use, only to be told that they could not be released until the cheque had cleared. Obviously our previous creditworthiness with Avon County Council counts for nothing with the new administrators and we then expected to be told to come back in three days' time when the cheque had cleared. Not so, we are not allowed to collect the books until the 11th May 1992."

As I have said, Mr. Boden is sorely grieved.

Another of my constituents, Mr. Roberts of 21 Victoria way, Magor, wanted a book of 25 tickets. He had to queue for 45 minutes. He has expressed his disgust with the entire situation on the bridge. Many will endorse his sentiments.

I have a further reference to make about the foreign-backed consortium. It has tried to sugar the pill. Severn Crossing plc has appointed as its chairman a Member of the other place and former Member of the House of Commons—a Liberal and a Welshman, Lord Hooson. Breathes there a man with soul so dead? What has the Liberal party come to? David Lloyd George must be turning in his grave.

One of the most famous social and historical incidents in Wales was the occasion of the Rebecca riots. Those riots were all about the fight against toll charges on our roads. Now, the Government are trying to justify their exploitation of Wales by attempting to misrepresent the position of the Labour party.

When Labour came to power at the end of 1964, the Severn bridge was at an advanced stage of construction. All the plans had been made, and all the agreements had been signed under the outgoing Conservative Transport Minister, Mr. Ernest Marples. Moreover, Welsh Labour Members had opposed the introduction of toll charges. An outstanding example was the late right hon. Ness Edwards, who represented Caerphilly. He had long advocated the construction of a Severn crossing.

When the first toll charges were introduced, the amount was in any case relatively small—two shillings and sixpence—and the bridge was a relative novelty. What is more, Wales was experiencing a period of full employment. How different things are today.

Had a Labour Government been elected last month, it is clear what it would have done. The intention was to phase out toll charges through the rescheduling of debt. On 5 March, my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley), the deputy leader of my party, stated categorically, "Tolls must go." He went on to say:

"While we will not break contracts there are ways of renegotiating contracts."

That was clearly a reference to the two Severn crossings.

The Government have been in power for 13 years, and have enjoyed all the benefits of North sea oil revenues. During that period, the original cost of the bridge has been paid for over and over again. Surely, if the Government felt any concern for the welfare of Wales, they would have wiped out that fictional debt on the Consolidated Fund long ago. The fact that they did not do so illustrates their contempt for Wales.

Individual Welsh firms have protested, but unfortunately Welsh business has no real champion. CBI Wales is impotent; it is hand in glove with the Government. How different has been the attitude of our local authorities. Gwent county council has been adamant in its opposition; so have the three Glamorgan county councils. The same applies to the Gwent district council association. Chepstow county council—which is near the bridge on the Welsh side—has a senior economist, Mr. Steve Hill, as its mayor this year. He has conducted a detailed analysis, and has concluded that the toll charges are seriously detrimental to the economy of the area.

I believe that the Government should enter into fresh negotiations with the consortium. They should insist that small vans be returned to their original category. Also, people living within a 20-mile radius of the bridge and working on the other side of the estuary should be eligible for a discount of up to 50 per cent. on the toll charge. The same should apply to the transport used by firms operating within the same radius. The Government should tell the consortium that, if it is prepared to reduce tolls correspondingly, they will wipe out the debt on the existing bridge.

Tolls are an anachronism and should be phased out on all estuarial crossings. They are an illogical disruption of traffic flow and impose considerable wear and tear on vehicles. The Select Committee on Transport, in its report in 1986, recommended the abolition of tolls.

I notice from the *Western Mail* today that Mr. John Prosser QC has joined our fight. He was held up in a three-mile tailback yesterday and was three quarters of an hour late for a hearing at Cardiff Crown court. He said that it was a disgrace and advised others, as well as himself, to protest to the Department of Transport.

[Mr. Roy Hughes]

The Severn Bridges Act 1992 is little short of an obscenity and the Government will regret its passing. This time they have gone a bridge too far.

9.46 pm

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Newport, East (Mr. Hughes) on having the perspicacity last week to obtain this Adjournment debate, the first of this Parliament, on such an important issue. It is not just a constituency matter as it affects the entire region of industrial south Wales. He has spoken passionately about it and has done so for many years. I wish to add what I can on behalf of the residents of the three Glamorgans, to which my hon. Friend has already referred. He has spoken on behalf of us all, but particularly on behalf of the county of Gwent. The only point on which I disagree with him is his suggestion of a 20-mile radius. I should prefer a 30-mile radius so that my constituency would be included in the area eligible for discount for frequent use of the bridge by those who commute from south Wales to the Bristol area for their daily employment.

The problem is not so much with the formula, which we have become used to even though we do not approve of it. The formula involves setting a price and then, as the Government would put it, capping the price increase each year by relating it to the rate of inflation—for example, retail price index plus so and so. We are used to that with water, gas, electricity and British Telecom. The problem is with the baseline on which the formula is set. If the old toll amount of 20p per car, which I believe was the price no more than three or four years ago, were still in existence, 20p plus a certain amount every year according to inflation would be seen as fairly reasonable by everybody in south Wales. However, over a very short time an unbelievable 700 per cent. increase has taken place in the basic car toll and I believe that the increase is similar for lorries and other heavyweight vehicles such as vans. It is no use the Government saying that they have concluded a beneficial arrangement for the consumer—whereby after 1 April this year prices cannot go up by more than the rate of inflation plus an allowance for any unexpected difficulties that the company may find—when the baseline for that annual increase formula has been jacked up to an unbelievable degree in the past three or four years.

First, the charge went up from 20p to 50p, which in itself was a 250 per cent. increase; then there was a 100 per cent. increase to £1. Finally, a further 40 per cent. increase on 1 April this year took it up to £1·40 for a one-way ticket and £2·80 for a return. I believe that that represents a 700 per cent. increase over four years. No doubt the Minister will correct me if my memory does not serve me well.

Even over a 10-year period, a 700 per cent. increase would be gross and unbelievable—and no basis for a fair formula for the constructors of the new bridge and the users of the old bridge. Any fair formula would be related to the original 20p, which in itself was a big increase on the formula set in the 1960s. It is ridiculous to increase the charge from 20p to £1·40 and then claim that a fair bargain has been struck between the producer—the constructor of the bridge—and the ordinary consumers, the users of the bridge. The formula is utterly one sided, and is intended to produce for the constructors of the new bridge a licence to print money.

We heard a lot in the Loyal Address earlier today about the need for more consumer choice, and the need to introduce accountability through the citizens charter, for the benefit of ordinary citizens and the users of public services. But we do not get anything like that with the bridge.

If a private company wants to build a new Severn bridge and thinks that it can beat the costs of the existing public sector bridge, why not have two bridges? Why not have one private sector bridge and one public sector bridge? But do we have choice? We certainly do not. To produce a guaranteed monopoly income which can go into the bank and produce profits for the company mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Newport, East, we have to sell the company the existing public sector bridge. That means that the company owns both bridges and has a total monopoly on crossings of the Severn south of Gloucester, and that we in south Wales have no other way of travelling along the national motorway system to London, to the south-east of England or to the continent without passing through the usurious, monopolistic privatised bridge set-up. There is no competition, no choice, no two-sided reasonable fair bargain for the road users of south Wales, whether commercial or individual.

The Government have created a Frankenstein's monster, and they will regret it in years to come. I believe that they have already been amazed by the serious adverse reaction to the new tolls. Now they will realise that the general public in south Wales—possibly in the Bristol area, too—does not regard the formula of "RPI plus X" as fair. The truth, as seen in south Wales, is that that formula really means "RIP plus off".

Such a set-up is part of the Government's general method of saying that they will continue the drive towards decreasing the basic rate of income tax from 25p to 20p in the pound. Of course that can be done, but only if they increase the fees, levies, supplementary charges and contributions that the public have to pay for everything else—things that are normally regarded as part of the purchase price for civilisation. When people pay income tax, they should get their roads, bridges, hospitals, schools, libraries and so on. They do not expect to have to pay income tax and then have to pay again through user charges, fees, contributions and levies. Wage earners do not care so much about what is taken out of their wage packets in income tax deductions as about the totality of stoppages, and what is left in their pockets at the end of the week to spend on the things that the Government do not provide. They expect things that the Government provide to have been taken care of already in the stoppages.

That shows the essentially fraudulent nature of the Conservative contract with the British public. The Government will lower income tax but jack up every other tax they can think of, whether it be national insurance contributions, user charges for bridges, or other contributions that people are expected to make, plus other forms of taxes. There are 56 different kinds of taxes. Income tax will be brought down by a penny a year, or whatever, but everything else will cost a lot more.

The Severn bridge has brought home to everyone in south Wales the deceptive way the Government have with taxation. They reduce income tax, but increase every other form of taxation one can imagine. That is why we are

making representations to the House on behalf of the whole of industrial south Wales. I am sure that Conservative Members, including the one or two here tonight who have been elected under Conservative colours, must be aware from correspondence from their constituents that the charges are regarded everywhere in industrial south Wales as a toll tax.

The charges are very unpopular and are regarded as an unfair bargain carried out behind Parliament's back. The details were withheld from the public in south Wales and in the south-west of England until the election was over. The Government will pay the price for that at the next election.

9.55 pm

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): I join in the congratulations offered to you, Madam Deputy Speaker, on your appointment. I also congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Newport, East (Mr. Hughes) on securing this debate. I agree with virtually everything that has been said and I will not repeat earlier points.

We are in an extraordinary situation. I have had more letters and more complaints from my constituents on this issue than on almost any other over the past five years. The reason is that many of my constituents in Newport, West choose to live in my constituency, and in my hon. Friends' constituencies in south Wales, and to work on the other side of the bridge. There was a considerable migration two or three years ago from the Bristol area to south Wales.

We find ourselves in the crazy position that, when Wales had campaigned for a bridge for over a decade, a Mephistophelian bargain was struck with the Government: if one had to have a bridge, one had to pay for it. That bargain seems to be doomed to continue for eternity. The alien consortium, to which the bridge and the second crossing were handed over, has proved in the first fortnight of its existence that it will screw every franc and every sou out of the people of south Wales.

I crossed the bridge on Tuesday, and we knew that there would be problems in the early days with the unfamiliarity of the toll and with change. On Tuesday, which is not a time of peak travel, and at midday, which is not a peak time of day for travelling, there was a six-mile queue coming into Wales. That means a wait of at least one hour.

Although Conservative Members may argue that the extraordinarily high rate of tolls is not a great additional cost on motoring, the perception of the cost is greatly magnified because the tolls have to be paid again and again as a single item. Many of the other costs of travel, such as the cost of vehicles and of petrol, and taxation, are taken care of and are not perceived as being such a burden. At present, Wales is seen as an area that is inaccessible and it seems that a great psychological barrier has been erected which deters people from coming in.

We know that there has been a devastating effect on people coming into Wales. It is rather like going into a safari park because people have to pay to go into Wales. Although there is some merit in charging for one way only —it has been effective in other countries—the charge has to be made for going into Wales because the inevitable hold-up if the charge was made on people coming the other way would mean that traffic would have to stand on the bridge, which would have many detrimental effects.

Why are we being penalised in this way? Is it the responsibility of the people of Wales for demanding the bridge? The responsibility lies with the design of the bridge. As we well know, and as my hon. Friend the Member for Newport, East suggested, the design was experimental, like that of the box-girder bridge.

The expectation of traffic was greatly underestimated —not so much for cars but certainly for lorries. The Government have been extremely permissive in respect of lorries on the bridge and elsewhere. The chance of being stopped with a lorry that is overloaded is one in every 5,000 journeys. When the trading standards department of the Welsh counties carried out a trial recently, it found that a third of the lorries on the road were overloaded. It is overloaded or badly loaded lorries that have shaken the bridge into early senility, and costs have mounted—not because of the price of building the bridge originally but because of the price of the repairs. The people of Wales are being penalised for a rotten design.

As hon. Members have said, the road is the main artery into south Wales. It is also a great European route—the main route from the continent of Europe to Ireland—and is enormously important.

It being Ten o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put.

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Arbuthnot.]*

Mr. Flynn: In conclusion—[HON. MEMBERS: "Carry on."] I am encouraged by my hon. Friends' enthusiasm to continue.

The story of the bridge has been an extraordinary one. We hear, for example, about the charge for the telephone call. It seems an extraordinary bit of money-grabbing on the part of this alien consortium that it should have changed the telephone call system. Everyone will have to ring up because we are talking about the most unreliable piece of road in the country—more unreliable even than the M25 around London. A daily hold-up can almost be guaranteed. At one time, it was possible to avoid delays if one avoided peak hours, but that is no longer the case. The bridge is virtually guaranteed to be congested at virtually every time of day, so the telephone call is important to identify the odd window of opportunity to get across the bridge in less than half an hour.

The consortium has used the same technique as the pornographers—the obscenity industry—getting itself an 0898 number. Those who have used the service know that one has to listen for several minutes before hearing the punchline—the information that one requires. I congratulate the *Western Mail* on printing the whole five minutes of vacuous waffle produced by this alien consortium to get more money out of the unfortunate people of south Wales who use the bridge.

In my constituency and in other constituencies in south Wales, an entirely new phenomenon is affecting jobs. The phrase "inward investment" is an ugly phrase used with some pride by the Government. We now have the phenomenon of outward divestment, whereby good jobs, jobs for the future, jobs in the sunrise industries—jobs at Inmos, at Parke-Davis in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Torfaen (Mr. Murphy), and in Llanelli—are disappearing. The firms are not closing down, disappearing or going out of business: jobs are being siphoned out of Wales.

Mr. Morgan : Renishaw.

Mr. Flynn: Yes, as my hon. Friend says, Renishaw. Those jobs are leaving Wales and most of them are arriving in France. Many of the Inmos jobs are going to Sicily, while other jobs are going to the third world, to Malta and Malaysia. Welsh jobs are disappearing from Wales by the process of outward divestment. When we bring people into Wales in an attempt to convince them that it is a suitable home for new industries, the barrier of the Severn bridge, with its daily queues, is a great disincentive to them to settle in south Wales.

My son owns a small van, and he was caught on the first day—he had to make two journeys across the bridge. I declare a financial interest: I was horrified by the new charge. The charge is not only extraordinarily high—the increase for small vans is crazy; it also involves change. One has either to wait for change or produce four or five different coins to the value of £5·60. That is totally unjustified. We know of the great problems that small businesses have suffered under this Government. The many business men who have written to me expressing their great anger want their voices to be heard here tonight. The Government must make a move on that. They cannot allow the charges to increase as they have now, and as they will in future. Wales is being subjected to highway robbery by a foreign Government.

10.4 pm

The Parliamentary Under[redacted] of State for Transport (Mr. Kenneth Carlisle): I join in the congratulations to you, Madam Deputy Speaker, on your new appointment. We on the Conservative Benches are delighted about that. I had the good fortune to experience your firm but sensitive handling of Committees upstairs. If you can bring that skill to the Chamber, as I am sure that you will, your appointment will be extremely popular. I wish you well.

I also congratulate the hon. Member for Newport, East (Mr. Hughes) on obtaining the first Adjournment debate of this Parliament. I would expect no less from him, although it is quite an achievement. I welcome his colleagues, the hon. Members for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) and for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn), who have taken part in this important debate. This is my first reply from the Dispatch Box as Minister responsible for roads and I am certain that I will have the pleasure of attending many Adjournment debates in the next few months.

The House well knows the close interest that the hon. Member for Newport, East has long taken in the Severn bridge. Therefore, it is no surprise that he has used his experience of the House to seize this early opportunity to raise last week's changes at the bridge. I hope in my reply to set out the background to those changes and to consider the wider aspects of what we are trying to do in that area.

The importance of the Severn crossing for the economy of south Wales is undeniable. Over the 25 years since the Severn bridge was opened in September 1966, traffic at the present bridge has grown threefold to a total approaching 19 million vehicles a year—more than 50,000 a day. The growth in traffic has been particularly rapid during much of the past decade, matching the recovery of the Welsh economy over that period. It is honest to admit that the economy of south Wales over the past decade has been transformed. We have seen the most encouraging level of foreign and other investment in that area—*[Interruption.]* If the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) on the Opposition Front Bench is interested in my reply, perhaps he will listen to some of the success stories in the Welsh economy.

Mr. Alun Michael (Cardiff, South and Penarth): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Carlisle: No, I am replying to the hon. Member for Newport, East.

The natural consequence of the growth has been that the capacity of the existing bridge is reaching saturation point. It will not be sufficient to meet the predicted levels of demand in future. Therefore, the Government gave a commitment as long ago as 1986 to provide additional capacity at the crossing. As a consequence, they set in train measures to provide that extra capacity. Work has now started on the construction of the second Severn crossing three miles downstream of the present bridge.

The new bridge and the link roads that will connect it to the motorway network will be open to traffic early in 1996. It will provide a major improvement in communications between England and Wales. In fact, it will more than double the road capacity across the Severn estuary and it will also offer shorter and more reliable journey times. It is a crucial development for the area and especially for south Wales where it should help to sustain the pace of economic regeneration and encourage further inward investment. More immediately, the construction of the new bridge will generate up to 1,000 jobs, the majority of which will be supplied locally.

The second bridge is very important for south Wales. It shows that we are keeping faith with Wales. Our determination to complete the bridge as soon as possible is just what Wales wants. Two inquiries into tolls have concluded that tolls do not affect the economy of south Wales.

The bridge is very important for south-west England, too. The whole Bristol area is developing, and the good links between south Wales and the Bristol area will help to make that whole region of the United Kingdom even more prosperous. I do not believe that it should be seen as just a Welsh problem or an opportunity for Wales; it is an opportunity for the whole United Kingdom.

Mr. Roy Hughes: Does the Minister appreciate that the toll is also detrimental to the economy of the south-west? People in the Chepstow-Newport area will not travel to Bristol to shop, to visit the Roman city of Bath, and so on. The toll is highly detrimental all round.

Mr. Carlisle: It seems to me that the growth in traffic across that bridge counteracts what the hon. Gentleman says. As I have said, two inquiries have shown that tolls do not affect the economy and certainly do not affect the volume of traffic. In any event, as we know, enterprise on that scale simply does not come cheaply. The new bridge alone will cost £300 million to build.

Equally clearly, however, the hon. Member for Newport, East finds it objectionable that users of the crossing, who will of course derive most benefit from the provision of the new bridge, should contribute to those costs. As he knows full well, for many years it has been the policy of successive Governments, both Labour and Conservative, that those who enjoy exceptional benefits from the provision of major estuarial crossings should contribute through tolls to the costs of providing them.

Indeed, as the hon. Gentleman does not need reminding, although the plans for the tolling of the Severn bridge had been prepared under a Conservative Administration, as he pointed out, in 1965 a Labour Government decided to bring in legislation which originally imposed tolls on the bridge. Therefore, it seems to me that, unless there has been a sharp U-turn, tolls are good Labour policy. There was no difference between the two main parties about the need to pay for such major crossings by tolls.

The new tolling arrangments which came into force on 26 April, and about which the hon. Gentleman has expressed so much concern, reflect proposals which were submitted to the Government, in the competition to provide the new bridge, by the Laing-GTM consortium, later to become established as the Severn River Crossing company. Its proposal to design, build, finance and operate the new bridge, and to take over the financing and operation of the existing bridge, offered the best overall value for money of all those submitted, whether involving private finance or public finance. It follows that any other option for providing the new bridge would have meant that users of the crossing would sooner or later have had to pay more, rather than less, by way of tolls than is now to be the case. Indeed, there could have been delay in building that bridge.

Despite the hon. Members' concern about what they rather haughtily called a foreign-backed consortium, it is in fact a British registered and based company. The French company GTM-Entrepose has a 35 per cent. shareholding, but, as hon. Members will accept, it is simply the mirror image of the way in which many British firms have a stake in foreign companies and invest overseas.

The new tolls, which have been the subject of much comment, have been fixed under a formula laid out in the Severn Bridges Act 1992. The basis of the new arrangements, including the principle of tolling in only one direction and the likely level of tolls for each category of vehicle, was explained by the Department as far back as April 1990, when we announced the award of the concession to the Severn River Crossing company. Subsequently, the details of the final proposals were set out in the Severn Bridges Bill, which Parliament naturally had every opportunity to debate during its passage.

I fully appreciate that the new tolls involve a sharp increase, especially for the users of light vans, but it is fair to point out that at no stage during the passage of the Bill —including the Standing Committee, on which the hon. Member for Newport, East served—was any comment, adverse or otherwise, made about the treatment of those vehicles relative to that of other vehicles. Moreover, although it was a hybrid Bill, which provides the opportunity for objections to be raised by way of petitions, no petitions were deposited against the Bill by groups representing road users and none which argued against the proposed treatment of light vans.

The hon. Member for Newport, East therefore had time to make those points during the passage of the Bill but never made them clearly and did not seem interested in them.

Mr. Roger Evans (Monmouth): Could my hon. Friend help us on this one? My constituents, especially in Chepstow, drive small vans across the Severn estuary. As the hon. Member for Newport, East (Mr. Hughes) said, they treat the Severn bridge as just another piece of the M4. How has it come about that the charges have been such a shock? They certainly were not appreciated until it happened.

Mr. Carlisle: First, I welcome my hon. Friend to the House. I look forward to his maiden speech with great anticipation, having already seen something of his verve. I congratulate him on his great victory in Monmouth. He will appreciate that the pattern of tolls for different vehicles was incorporated in the Bill. It was not challenged by Opposition Members. Indeed, one must bear in mind that if we had reduced the tolls for vans, we would inevitably have had to increase the tolls for cars by a greater amount to pay for the bridge. I wonder what Opposition Members would have said to that.

Mr. Roy Hughes: Does the Minister appreciate that I and my hon. Friend the Member for Torfaen (Mr. Murphy) served on the Standing Committee and opposed whole scale the toll charges in the Bill while his colleagues on the Conservative Benches sat like dumb mutes? They did not say a word in opposition. We have been basically against toll charges as a whole. When we talk about vans in the second category which will pay a toll of £5·60, it is reasonable to suggest——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. Interventions must by their nature be brief.

Mr. Carlisle: I understand what the hon. Gentleman says, but the truth is that when the Bill was going through the House he never criticised the formula and balance of tolls between the different sorts of vehicles. That was the point that I sought to make.

In the circumstances, given the benefit in journey times and costs provided by the Severn crossing, and the greater benefits which will accrue once the new bridge is opened —that is the vital point—the Government believe that the new tolls are reasonable for all categories of vehicle. Vehicle users can obtain discounts on the tolls of 20 per cent. in the case of cars and light vehicles by buying books of tickets from the concessionaire.

The hon. Member for Newport, East also reported that some of his constituents had experienced difficulties in obtaining the discounted toll tickets. Obviously, I am sorry about that. But the sale of the tickets is a matter for the concessionaire. I understand that the company is aware of the problems which have arisen as a result of the unexpectedly large initial rush of demand for tickets. It is dealing as quickly as possible with the backlog of applications. I hope that the problems will soon disappear.

The House may also be interested to know that people who are disabled and those who ride motor cycles can use the bridges free. Lastly, I emphasise that the tolls are essential to help build a new bridge rapidly within four years. The new bridge will be of huge benefit to the economies of both south Wales and south-west England.

The hon. Member for Newport, East raised some points about the financing of the bridge. I did not follow the figures that he used or recognise them. I understand that there is £120 million of debt on the existing bridge. Of course, during the period of existence of the bridge much has been spent, for example, on repairs and other measures. Under the concession agreement, the Severn River Crossing company is entitled to collect a total of £976 million in revenue over the concession period, provided that the period does not exceed 30 years. The

[Mr. Carlisle]

£976 million figure is justified on the basis that the company is financing over a period of some 20 years or more construction work costing about £300 million and the repayment of the deficit of about £120 million outstanding on the existing bridge. In addition, it is now responsible for the costs of maintaining and operating both bridges throughout that period. Given the considerable interest costs inevitably also involved over the period, the total revenue requirement is certainly not unreasonable.

Dr. Kim Howells (Pontypridd): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Carlisle: No. The hon. Gentleman was not involved in the debate and I have several more points to cover.

Before I comment on the traffic delays which have just now occurred at the bridge, I should first inform the House of the tragic accident that happened yesterday when the driver of a vehicle died in an accident on the approaches to the bridge. The House will appreciate that I cannot say anything that might prejudice the formal outcome of the inquiries being made by the coroner and the police. However, I understand that shortly after midday a van collided with stationary vehicles at the rear of a queue of traffic leading to the bridge. The driver of the van died and three people from other vehicles were taken to hospital. Initial reports from the coroner suggest that the van driver died of natural causes. I should like to offer my sincere condolences and sympathy to the bereaved and injured.

With regard to the traffic delays at the bridge, which have been described, the Severn River Crossing company —which is, of course, responsible for levying the new tolls —put out a great deal of publicity about the new arrangements, with the assistance of the Department of Transport and the Welsh Office, during the two weeks before the changeover. A press conference was held in the area, leaflets and press releases were issued, and prominent signs were put up on the approaches to the bridge. However, no publicity campaign can ever hope to reach everybody and, inevitably, many people were caught unawares on that first Sunday and the following Monday morning, without the right money to hand. The practical difficulties of dealing with the new toll amounts and the extra handling of change required also caused some initial problems for users and toll collectors alike. In addition, regrettably, a small minority of users stopped to complain to the toll collectors about the new system, or refused to pay, thus causing further delays to other users. The end result, as the House will know, was that for a time there were long tailbacks of westbound traffic, heading towards Wales. By an unfortunate coincidence, there were also problems in the eastbound direction on that Monday morning because of the breakdown of a lorry.

After the first Monday until this Tuesday morning, including the bank holiday weekend, there were no undue delays at the bridge. Yesterday morning, however, one of the toll booths had to be closed for urgent safety work, leaving only five available. This led to some delays to traffic during the day. These were compounded in the afternoon by more serious disruption arising from the aftermath of the tragic accident that I described earlier. The safety work at the toll booths is scheduled to be completed this evening so that, while there have been further delays today, the situation should be back to normal from tomorrow onwards. I greatly regret any inconvenience caused to motorists.

Notwithstanding yesterday's events and the temporary disruption to traffic arising from the need for urgent safety work at the toll booths, the general picture has been that all concerned—users and toll collectors alike—have quickly adapted to the new arrangements. I should also remind the House that traffic in the eastbound direction now passes through toll-free, so is no longer interrupted by the need to stop for toll collection. In time, that change will be greatly welcomed by the bridge users.

Work is in hand to increase the capacity of the toll plaza at the bridge for one-way tolling. This includes the construction of two new toll lanes and the provision of tandem toll booths in three lanes, providing a total of up to 11 toll booths. The concessionaire is making every effort to provide the full capacity as soon as possible, to minimise the possibility of delays to the summer holiday traffic. Those arrangements will provide ample capacity for the period until the new bridge is opened.

In addition, the concessionaire is planning to introduce, later this year, automatic vehicle identification systems for the automatic collection of tolls, which should help to streamline the arrangements for regular users.

Although it was not mentioned in the debate, I know that there have been some complaints about the telephone information service. The service has been altered to improve it, so that the current traffic and toll information is given first. Other news, such as weather conditions, is now given later so that people need not wait for it. We are also seeking faster updating and there will be more telephone lines—up to 600.

It was likely that the introduction of a wholly new system of tolling at such an important and busy location as the Severn bridge would cause some temporary disruption, however thorough the preparations. As I have said, I regret any delays during the first day.

To return to the main theme of the debate, it is important to remember that the ultimate purpose of the changes is to enable the financing and construction of the second Severn bridge.

Mr. Morgan: Are there any circumstances in which the concessionaires can come back to the Department of Transport and ask for a further increase, over and above the formula? I read in the press that they could say that they had now uncovered unexpected difficulties and wished to increase the toll charges over and above the already highly injurious formula that exists.

Mr. Carlisle: These are my first few days in the Department, but I understand that the formula is laid down in the Act and that the company must abide by that formula. However, if I am wrong—I hope that the hon. Gentleman will understand the position—I shall write to the hon. Gentleman to put the record straight. I believe that the formula is laid down by an Act of Parliament, which has been thoroughly debated by both sides of the House.

Thanks to the Government's commitment to progressing the scheme as a matter of the highest priority and the way in which we have managed successfully to tap into the initiative and resources of the private sector, work on the project is already under way. Within four years the new

bridge will be open, when it will provide huge benefits to the economy of the area, not only south Wales but the whole of south-west England.

Hon. Members: Shame on you.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I deplore seated interventions, particularly when they are repeated.

Mr. Carlisle: In paying attention to your words, Madam Deputy Speaker, I shall conclude by saying that the Government's actions and belief in attracting private sector money into those schemes have enabled that area of the United Kingdom to look forward to that much needed bridge long before it might have done so under any other Government. The current arrangements and the drive that is going ahead to provide the bridge, which is being paid for by those who use it, are the right approach. Ultimately, they will be widely welcomed by local people, who do not want quibbling and delay. We are determined and committed to get the bridge in action as soon as possible.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-nine minutes past Ten o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 7 May 1992

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

2.35 pm

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Will you confirm that on Thursdays, when there is business in the House the following week, it is usual for a statement to be made and for questions to be asked about that business? Is it correct that on this occasion there is to be neither a statement nor an opportunity for Back Benchers to call the Government to account through questions? Through your offices, can we establish who is responsible for the failure to have a business statement and questions? Are the Government, with their tiny majority, refusing, or have the usual channels made some other arrangements, which I do not find satisfactory? Will you confirm that business questions should be a matter for the entire House of Commons and not just the two Front Benches? Back Benchers in particular want to raise matters that are important to their constituencies and elsewhere and which concern the business for the following week.

Madam Speaker: This is a bit of an unusual week, even for me. As the hon. Gentleman understands, this is a matter for the Government business managers, not for the Chair. It is outside the authority of the Chair.

Mr. Skinner: But it is not usual?

Madam Speaker: Order.

BILLS PRESENTED

BRITISH COAL AND BRITISH RAIL (TRANSFER PROPOSALS)

Mr. Secretary Heseltine, supported by Mr. Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr. Secretary MacGregor, Mr. Secretary Howard, Mr. Secretary Hunt, Mr. Secretary Lang, Mrs. Secretary Shephard, Mr. Tim Eggar and Mr. Roger Freeman, presented a Bill to confer powers on the British Coal Corporation and the British Railways Board to act in relation to proposals for the transfer of any of their functions, property, rights or liabilities to any other body or person; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time tomorrow and to be printed [Bill 1.]

EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES (AMENDMENT)

Mr. Secretary Hurd, supported by The Prime Minister, Mr. Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr. Secretary Clarke, Mr. Secretary Heseltine, Mr. Secretary MacGregor, Mr. Tony Newton, Mr. John Gummer, Mr. Secretary Howard, Mrs. Secretary Shephard and Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones, presented a Bill to make provision consequential on the Treaty on European Union signed at Maastricht on 7th February 1992: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time tomorrow and to be printed [Bill 2.]

NON-DOMESTIC RATING

Mr. Secretary Howard, supported by Mr. Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr. Secretary Heseltine, Mr. Secretary Hunt, Mr. John Redwood and Mr. Robin Squire, presented a Bill to make further provision with respect to non-domestic rating for the period beginning with 11th March 1992 and ending with 31st March 1995; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time tomorrow and to be printed [Bill 3.]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That—

(1) Standing Order No. 13 (Arrangement of public business) shall have effect for this Session with the following modifications namely:

In paragraph (4) the word "thirteen" shall be substituted for the word "ten" in line 44; in paragraph (5) the word "eighth" shall be substituted for the word "seventh" in line 46; and in paragraph (8) the word "two" shall be substituted for the word "four" in line 67;

(2) Private Members' Bill shall have precedence over Government business on 11th December, 15th, 22nd and 29th January, 5th, 12th and 19th February, 26th March, 23rd and 30th April, 7th and 14th May and 2nd July;

(3) Private Members' Notices of Motions shall have precedence over Government business on 19th and 26th June, 3rd and 10th July, 13th 20th and 27th November, 4th December, 26th February and 12th March, and ballots for these Notices shall be held after Questions on 3rd, 10th, 17th and 24th June, 28th October, 4th, 11th and 18th November and 10th and 24th February;

(4) On Monday 15th February and Monday 17th May, Private Members' Notices of Motions shall have precedence over Government business until Seven o'clock and ballots for these Notices shall be held after Questions on Thursday 28th January and Thursday 29th April; and

(5) No Notice of Motion shall be handed in for any of the days on which Private Members' Notices have precedence under this Order in anticipation of the ballot for that day.—*[Mr. Newton.]*

Orders of the Day

Debate on the Address

[SECOND DAY]

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question,

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, as follows:—

Most Gracious Sovereign,

We, Your Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled, beg leave to offer our humble thanks to Your Majesty for the Gracious Speech which Your Majesty has addressed to both Houses of Parliament—*[Mr. Kenneth Baker.]*

Question again proposed.

Public Expenditure

2.37 pm

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Michael Portillo): I wish to add my welcome to you, Madam Speaker, on taking up your post in the Chair. When you were elected there was a great deal of discussion about the loneliness of your position and the fact that you can have no friends. As the new Chief Secretary, I feel the strongest empathy for your position. I no longer have any friends. I have already found that colleagues who used to greet me cheerfully in the Corridors now pass by disdainfully on the other side. My ministerial colleagues are firmly pledged to support me in the most rigorous control of public spending and have given me their most firm and unwavering support, but always with the caveat, "Not in my Department, thank you." I believe that that is known appropriately as "NIMDism".

It is unusual during the debate on the Address to have a debate on public expenditure separate from the main debate on the economy, but public spending is an important subject, and I am delighted that it has been chosen. However, I am surprised that it is the Labour party which has chosen that subject. If there is one point on which we can agree, it is that economic policy was the issue on which the Labour party lost the general election. Its decision that economic policy should be the subject of the first debate is brave indeed. That is known as leading with one's chin, and it provides an early opportunity for the architects of Labour's defeat—the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) and the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett)—to remind us how their designer socialism turned out to be the blueprint for losing a record fourth election on the trot.

It is astonishing to sentient beings such as you, Madam Speaker, and myself, that now, with their edifice so evidently collapsed, those same architects are now referred to—apparently with no sense of irony—as the "dream ticket". Labour Members representing Scotland—those who survived the Tory onslaught there—will recall the Tay bridge disaster. William McGonagall—a fine poet with whom you, Madam Speaker, will be familiar—tells us that the

"Beautiful Railway Bridge of the Silv'ry Tay"

collapsed with the loss of 90 lives

"On the last Sabbath day of 1879,
Which will be remember'd for a very long time."

The architects of the Tay bridge never worked again—yet the designers of Labour's disaster are apparently to be commissioned to prepare the next set of drawings, with dispatch and without much of a competition. How can the Labour party contemplate forgiving the master craftsmen of its defeat? How can it entrust the future to such proven incompetents? The clue is to be found in the term "dream ticket". Shakespeare understood dream tickets. How prophetically he spoke of the need for modern electorates to forgive incompetent shadow Ministers. In "A Midsummer Night's Dream" he gave them the perfect apology:

"If we shadows have offended,
Think but this, and all is mended,
That you have but slumber'd here,
While these visions did appear."

That, indeed, is the dream ticket.

Although I am delighted to be given the opportunity to debate public spending, could it be that the Labour party has chosen that topic to enable each candidate for its leadership and deputy leadership to perform in the House? This will be a sort of beauty parade—if one can describe in such terms an event involving the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott).

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Portillo: I shall, even though this is by way of a maiden speech.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Congratulations.

The Minister is pressing to know why we have chosen a debate on economic affairs. I have here a leaflet—I see that the Minister is being briefed about it by the Chancellor of the Exchequer. Perhaps he will tell us more about this document, which I believe was circulated as an eve-of-poll leaflet in the constituency of the hon. Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall). It describes a tax demand from the Labour party, called "Labour's Tax Bombshell", which is followed by a tax table which was replicated in the tabloid newspapers.

Will the Minister admit today that that tax table is a lie? It was a campaign lie; it was not based on the truth. Those tax tables were never at the heart of Labour policy, and were never used by the shadow Chancellor. They were not produced at our press conference or in the shadow Budget. They were a lie, yet they contributed to the election of a Conservative Government. Will the Minister disown that leaflet today? *[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Portillo: In my wildest dreams, I did not expect to draw so much blood so early in the debate. The hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) now tells us that the tax proposals were not central to the Labour party's policies. What an extraordinary thing! I suppose that that is a vote for the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould), if not for the hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone).

I will answer the point raised by the hon. Member for Workington. We costed Labour's programme—the programme that the Labour party gave us. Why did we have to cost it? The reason was that the Labour party refused to cost it. If the Labour party had costed it, we might have been able to think about its figures. In the absence, we provided our own, based on Labour's programme.

Mr. Campbell-Savours *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman has had an intervention. I hope that he will bide his time for moment.

Mr. Portillo: I was drawn to mention the hon. Member for Brent, East. I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman has been excluded from the beauty parade. He has been banned even from reaching the catwalk. That is a great pity in view of his undoubted talent for spotting an election-losing policy at 40 paces. He warned the Labour party time and time again that its policies on taxation matters would lead it to disaster, but like the court fools who were licensed by great monarchs to tell the truth, but not to do it too often or too loudly, the hon. Gentleman told the truth too often and too loudly, and he has been sent packing from Labour's court. He knows why the election was lost, and he knows why it was won.

Our victory underlined the British people's confidence in this Government's capacity to manage the economy. It was an endorsement of our reliability under the pressure of a difficult international environment, with growth in the Group of Seven countries during 1991 at its lowest in a decade, and with the United States, Canada and Germany all having experienced recessions. The key factor in our victory was the voters' fundamental confidence in the Government's control of public finances.

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Is the hon. Gentleman rising on a point of order?

Mr. Marshall: Yes. The hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) insists on calling— *[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Is the hon. Member for Hendon, South rising on a point of order?

Mr. Marshall: Yes, I am.

Madam Speaker: Let me hear it.

Mr. Marshall: The hon. Member for Workington says that I won my election on a lie. I did not, and I think that he should withdraw that statement.

Madam Speaker: That is not a point of order for the Chair. I hope that we shall have a most robust and interesting debate, and I hope that it will not be too personalised.

Mr. Portillo: Voters in the election were clearly concerned about how much they would be asked to pay in taxes, on what the money would be spent and what quality of services that money would buy. This party believes that what the Government take from those who earn to spend on their behalf should be as little as possible and should be spent as well as possible. That clarity of vision gave voters a stark choice.

Which party could the voters trust, and which party would lead them out of the recession? Was it to be the party whose solution to the recession was a £7 billion tax increase? Was it to be the party that, faced with a recession in the mid-1970s, recklessly carried on spending? Was it the party that, having increased public spending in the 1970s as a proportion of gross domestic product by some six percentage points in just two years, was forced to raise tax rates to 98p in the pound? Was it the party that, despite that massive increase in taxation, still could not balance the books so that the public sector borrowing requirement peaked at 9½ per cent. of GDP—in today's money, almost £60 billion? Was it the party that borrowed and borrowed, and went on borrowing until its credit ran dry and it had to crawl to the International Monetary Fund?

The answer to those almost rhetorical questions is no. Instead, the voters put their trust in a party that had shown over the period of its government that it could reduce public borrowing, end the inexorable rise in public expenditure's share of national income and bring about a massive reduction in personal taxation.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): On borrowing, the Chief Secretary will know that there was an estimate of roughly a £28 billion public sector borrowing requirement. There is also another suggestion in the hidden agenda that the likely outturn is well over £35 billion. What I want to know from the Chief Secretary, who is trying to lecture the Labour party about borrowing, is when he, in the medium term or otherwise, along with the Chancellor of the Exchequer, will be able to balance the books. We have a right to that answer now. We did not have it in the general election. Tell us now.

Mr. Portillo: On the first point, I have no reason to change our forecast of a £28 billion PSBR for this year. The rest of my speech deals with the broader point, and I hope that the hon. Gentleman will bear with me.

The tax reforms introduced by the Government since 1979 are the envy of Europe. We have cut the basic rate of income tax from 33p to 25p, and the top rate from 83p to 40p. We have introduced a new starting income tax rate of 20p, we have raised basic tax allowances by 27 per cent. in real terms, we have cut the corporation tax rate from 52 per cent. to 33 per cent., which is now a level lower than in any EC or G7 country, and we have reduced the small companies' rate of corporation tax from 42 per cent. to 25 per cent.—a remarkable record.

Despite that reduction, we have been able to increase public spending in priority areas, in particular to ensure that it reaches those people who depend necessarily on the taxpayer. I said just now "despite that reduction in taxation", but in fact it is largely because of that reduction. Opposition Members will not understand that paradox. They are not good at understanding paradoxes; they are good only at creating them—inadvertently. But the lesson of the past 13 years is that, if we reward enterprise and if we give people access to wealth creation, we get more wealth creation. It is as simple as that.

Lower tax rates and a smaller role for the state foster an environment in which business can flourish, industry can prosper and the economy can grow. It is that growth which can enable and which will enable the Government to increase public expenditure in key areas, cut direct taxes and reduce borrowing.

Mr. Bruce Grocott (The Wrekin): Before the Chief Secretary goes entirely into fantasy, when he is talking about the economy growing, will he remind us how the economy grew in the past 12 months?

Mr. Portillo: The hon. Member knows that we have not had growth in the past 12 months, but his scepticism and cynicism are answered by this point. Labour Members also could not understand this point. They could not believe

[Mr. Portillo]

that we would be able to reduce public borrowing from the level at which it had been left to us by the Labour party. They did not understand that we could cut public spending as a proportion of GDP and could reduce taxation. We did all those things during our period in government, and we shall do them again. That is what we did in the 1980s, and that is what we will do in the 1990s.

It is by a determined policy of rolling back the reach and the scope of the state that the Government have created the conditions for a massive increase in wealth creation, with benefits not just for a privileged few but for all, spread widely through our community. Individuals are now free to buy their own council houses. They are free to leave the state earnings-related pension scheme. They are free to take out personal pensions. More than 4·5 million people so far have done just that.

It is now easier to set up and participate in employee share schemes, while the introduction of personal equity plans has reduced the bias against direct share ownership by the people. The return of state businesses to the private sector has not only given employees in those businesses a stake in the businesses in which they work, but has contributed to wider share ownership among the public at large. Those policies are the ones that we pursued successfully in the past decade. They are again at the core of the new Parliament, as the Queen's Speech makes clear.

We had to hear a great deal during the election campaign about how we were not spending enough on this programme or on that other pet project of the Opposition. No doubt, undaunted by the electorate's judgment at the election, the hon. Member for Derby, South will repeat the same things this fine spring afternoon.

You will not be surprised to hear from me, Madam Speaker, that I do not believe that one can judge the standard of services by the amount of taxpayers' money that we put into them. As Mandy Rice-Davies might have said, a Chief Secretary would say that, wouldn't he? But even if we use that outdated measure favoured by Labour Governments in the 1960s and 1970s and still favoured by the hon. Member for Derby, South today, it is clear that we have delivered large increases in resources to priority areas and that we were able to do that while cutting direct taxes and cutting public borrowing.

Since 1978-79, spending on the health service in England has increased by more than 54 per cent. Spending on law and order has doubled. Capital spending per pupil in the nation's schools fell by 60 per cent. under Labour. Since 1978-79, when, you will recall, Madam Speaker, we came to power, it has risen by 13 per cent.

Central Government investment spending on health and social services fell by 26 per cent. under Labour, but it has risen by 53 per cent. under this Government. Investment in vital infrastructure such as national roads and transport fell by almost 40 per cent. under the Labour Government, and is up by 63 per cent. under this Government. There have been substantial increases in the investment in British Rail and London Transport. Investment by those two this year is set to be more than £2·5 billion.

The reason why I have drawn your attention to these highly significant statistics, Madam Speaker, is to demonstrate that the Chief Secretary is not necessarily against public spending. I am against excessive public spending, poor value for money and public spending on the wrong things. In fairness to my colleagues, I should say that that has generally given Chief Secretaries plenty of scope, as my distinguished predecessor found when he had the job.

The essence of good government is to decide from time to time what our priorities are and to ensure that the money is available for those priorities and for those people most in need. That requires the Government to keep the firmest grip over the total of public spending. Aneurin Bevan once said that the language of priorities was the religion of socialism. But today the language of priorities is the monopoly of Conservatism.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): I am grateful to the Minister for giving way to answer a question which he is uniquely fitted to answer. In determining the right level of expenditure for local government, his Government adopted standard spending assessments. Does he agree that more than 50 councils—both Conservative and Labour-controlled—received less money for their services than even the Government designated because of the shortfall in their SSA for capital charges of interest? For instance, Newham had £10 million less than it should have had because £18 million was allocated by the Government for interest charges, but it had to pay £28 million of interest. All those councils had to top-slice services. Was that deliberate or was it a mistake?

Mr. Portillo: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for raising the point about interest. It simply shows that a policy of borrowing does not come freely. The Government do not reward local authorities for the level of borrowing that they undertake. The Government compensate for what we believe to be an appropriate level of borrowing. That is why authorities which borrow excessively will have to bear the cost themselves. It is absolutely right that they should do so.

Value for money must play its part. When my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister was Chief Secretary to the Treasury, he summarised the need to focus on efficiency when he said:

> "Value for money is not an arcane fetish of Treasury Ministers . . . It is an absolute obligation that public sector managers owe to the taxpayer."

Value for money has been central to our reforms, in particular in health and education.

Figures for the first six months of our national health service reforms suggest that an extra 250,000 patients have been treated this year. Since 1978-79, there are 16,000 more doctors and dentists and 51,000 more nurses and midwives. In higher education, the number of students has risen from one in eight in 1979 to one in four in the coming year. Efficiency scrutinies, market testing and compulsory competitive tendering are saving us hundreds of millions of pounds a year in central Government, local government and the national health service.

The Queen's Speech underlines the priority that the Government attach to improving the quality of public services. The citizens charter, under the excellent stewardship of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, will be at the centre of decision-making and steps will be taken to apply its principles throughout the public services, promoting the challenge of competition and putting the customer first.

At the heart of the citizens charter is the principle that what the state does it must do well. The charter

programme is about finding better ways of converting the money that can be afforded into even better services. That will be a central component of public expenditure policy in the years ahead. However, the citizens charter is designed to complement, rather than substitute for, the Government's other fiscal policy objectives. Those objectives are unchanged, as the Queen's Speech makes clear.

Our determination to control public spending and conduct the business of Government prudently does not simply arise from our desire for efficient government and sound economic policy. Vital though those both are, there is, for us, a profound question of principle. Unlike the Opposition, we do not believe in the inexorable growth of the reach and size of the state. Nor do we believe that the state can and should try to solve all our problems.

Unlike the Opposition, we believe in rolling back the state and returning to the individual as much autonomy over his or her life as possible. For that reason, it is vital to keep the firmest control of that proportion of the national wealth that is taken from the people in taxation and spent on their behalf.

The Queen's Speech commits us to reducing the share of national income taken by the state, as it commits us to balancing the budget over the medium term. We shall set policy in the medium term to ensure that the United Kingdom meets the convergence criteria set out in the Maastricht treaty, and we shall reduce taxes when it is prudent to do so.

I do not claim that attaining those objectives will be easy, but attain them we must. Otherwise, we shall leave future generations with an unacceptable legacy. A sustained rise in borrowing would obviously imply higher debt interest payments in years to come.

The right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East has stuck doggedly to his shadow Budget against criticism from far and wide—nay, from as far afield as Dagenham. The hon. Member for Derby, South has recently told us of her continued belief in clause 4, her attachment to the trade unions, her affiliation to CND and her lingering fondness for the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) and, indeed, for Mr. Arthur Scargill. The hon. Lady believes that a combination of leader and deputy leader of her party can form what she calls a "creative partnership".

That creative partnership on offer today is between the economic policies that lost Labour the 1992 election and the broader policies that lost Labour the elections of 1983 and 1987. That may be described as a dream. It is certainly the Labour party sleepwalking into the future. If it is a dream ticket, it is a dream come true not for the Labour party but for the Conservative party.

While the Labour party dreams, we shall work. Our policy remains to balance the budget over the medium term and to reduce taxation when it is prudent to do so. The policy is tough and is beyond the comprehension of an Opposition who do not understand how the economy works, nor the need to make choices. But it is a less daunting task than we faced in the 1980s, when we inherited high rates of taxation and a deficit in excess of today's. During the 1980s, we cut those taxes and we eliminated that deficit. Last month, we were re-elected because the British people know that the policies that succeeded in the 1980s will succeed again in the 1990s.

3.5 pm

Mrs. Margaret Beckett (Derby, South): May I join in the congratulations to you, Madam Speaker? I am delighted to see you in your place.

I also congratulate the Chief Secretary to the Treasury on his promotion to the Cabinet. I am not entirely surely whether I should congratulate him on the specific post that he occupies, for two reasons. The first is the underlying situation that he has inherited—the state of the public finances, about which I propose to say a little more than he did. The second reason is the framework within which the right hon. Gentleman is expected to resolve those problems, about which I shall again say a little more than he did.

In case the right hon. Gentleman thought that a change of personnel might deflect our approach to the Government's policy, it is only fair to warn him that that is not so. The present Prime Minister, when he was Chancellor, speedily dissociated himself from targets set by his predecessor. When asked about the phrase that inflation should be the judge and jury of performance, he said, "I never said that." That was a wise precaution, as his policies were just about to shove inflation to almost 11 per cent. It may be that one reason for the present Chief Secretary's appointment is that he will be able to make a similar claim, and state, "I did not say that," about a number of matters that his predecessor has recently said.

The policy stance that the right hon. Gentleman must defend and implement on this occasion was explicitly stated and reinforced not only by his predecessor, the dear departed Chief Secretary to the Treasury, now the Secretary of State for National Heritage, but by the Chancellor and the Prime Minister that the present Chief Secretary to the Treasury still serves. I was delighted to hear the present Chief Secretary reiterate his position today.

The other possibility that we must entertain is that it is partly the Chief Secretary's own record that commends itself to the Prime Minister as thoroughly as it alarms me. The right hon. Gentleman came into government at the Department of Social Security, where he showed considerable competence and absolutely no conscience about presiding over a steady stream of cuts in the standards of living of the poorest people in our society. Those cuts were inflicted at the behest of the then Chief Secretary, now our caring Prime Minister. The right hon. Gentleman had a brief spell of relaxation at the Department of Transport and then resurfaced as the handler of the poll tax, which I understand he still defends.

I listened with fascination today when the right hon. Gentleman spoke about his views as Chief Secretary. He said—I hope that I repeat him correctly—that he was not against public spending, but against excessive public spending where it is poor value for money and spending on wrong things. I cannot think of a worse characteristic for a Chief Secretary than to champion the poll tax, as it suggests that he is willing—apart from anything else—to see billions of pounds of public money wasted on ideological folly. We look forward, not only with interest but with some trepidation, to the right hon. Gentleman's approach to the problems that he inherits.

In this first day of debate on the Queen's Speech, it seems right to examine the position of public expenditure due to the claims that the Government made during the election which, as the Chief Secretary fairly said, were at

[Mrs. Margaret Beckett]

the heart of their statements about their record, the promises that they made for the future and the basis on which they were re-elected. The light that the Queen's Speech casts on those promises is also worth examining in this debate.

The first of the right hon. Gentleman's problems is the recession-worsened state of public finances, both the overall picture, and the waste, mismanagement and misdirection that that picture conceals. Let us briefly dispose of the myth of world recession, which, back in 1990 to 1991, was supposed to have ambushed an innocent Government from behind. It was, to be blunt, a load of baloney. Britain's recession was begat in Downing street and fed and nurtured in all those Whitehall Departments where Ministers insisted on price increases for electricity, for water, for rents, for fares—until, as inflation headed inexorably upwards, so too did interest rates: to 15 per cent., where they stayed and stayed and stayed, seeing off in the process thousands of our fellow citizens, who lost their businesses and homes as a result.

Sadly for our national interest, the fate of the boy who kept crying wolf has overtaken the Government—a wolf in the shape if not of a world recession, then certainly of serious problems in many of the world's economies. That is likely to cause increased problems for the Government, who hoped that someone else's growth might have helped to pull us forward out of our home-grown recession. As it is, we are in somewhat uncharted waters. After the elections of 1983 and 1987, the Government let inflation and interest rates rip and erode the promises that they had made on public spending. Inflation doubled within two years of each of those elections as public spending was cut or promises were not fulfilled; then interest rates rose to squeeze out inflation.

Membership of the exchange rate mechanism and the path of convergence to monetary union will make this course much more difficult to follow now this occasion, yet the Government must deal with the borrowing requirement of £28 billion which they predict for this year—and rising—against the background of a continued balance of payments deficit, which, without precedent, has persisted even in the course of the worst recession since the 1930s. Both the borrowing requirement and the balance of payments deficit are the consequence of underlying weakness in our economy, and that weakness, like the recession itself, is a product of this Government's mismanagement of the economy.

In both the recessions that the Government have induced, we have lost manufacturing capacity—20 per cent. of it in the first one alone. So we can no longer satisfy the demand for goods at home by the sale of goods produced at home—hence our balance of payments problems. And the startling and abrupt turnround in our public finances—from surplus quickly to balance and then in a year to a £14 billion deficit and a predicted doubling to a £28 billion deficit this year—is a result not of Government response to the recession, for which a case could perhaps be made, but almost wholly of the impact of the recession.

I noticed, incidentally, that the Chief Secretary referred to the borrowing requirement of today as if it were better than the borrowing requirement of the last Labour Government. [HON. MEMBERS: "It is."] Conservative Members, not unusually, are wrong. If we take borrowing requirements excluding privatisation receipts, the fair basis of comparison—*[Interruption.]* That is the only sound basis of comparison, as the former Prime Minister who talked about selling off the family silver reminded the Conservative party. On this comparable basis, the borrowing requirement in 1978-79 was 5·4 per cent. of GDP. Next year, 1992-93, it is set to be 5·8 per cent. of GDP. So much for the prudence of the Conservative party.

Mr. Tim Smith (Beaconsfield): The hon. Lady has been a little selective in her use of statistics. Perhaps she will remind us of the figures for public sector borrowing in 1975-76. Were they not 9 per cent. of GDP then, and would not that be £60 billion at today's prices?

Mrs. Beckett: The hon. Gentleman is referring to the centre of the lifespan of the last Labour Government, and I cannot recall whether his figure is right for 1975-76 or for the following year—*[Interruption.]* There is no need for Conservative Members to get so excited. I am making a minor point, and I cannot remember the year to which the figures apply. Unlike Conservative Members, I believe in using accurate statistics. I cannot recall from memory whether the hon. Gentleman's figure refers to 1975-76 or to 1976-77. That is the only point I am making, but I shall return to the hon. Gentleman's observation, such as it was, later.

I remind the hon. Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith) that the last Labour Government left a borrowing requirement lower than the one that they inherited from the previous Conservative Government under the premiership of the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Sir E. Heath), and in the course of the lifetime of that Labour Government they were hit by a fivefold increase in the price of oil. Nothing comparable has happened to this Government. The only problems that they have had were created by their own incompetence, as the hon. Gentleman is aware, and they still have a bigger borrowing requirement than the one that we left, which was smaller than the one that we inherited.

Mr. John Marshall: Will the hon. Lady confirm that, over the lifetime of the last Labour Government, the average public sector borrowing requirement was 6·5 per cent. of GDP, which is higher than that proposed for the current year?

Mrs. Beckett: We inherited the consequences of the Barber boom. The hon. Gentleman should read the speeches by Sir Geoffrey Howe and by Mrs. Thatcher, both of whom are no longer Members. They both acknowledged that we inherited the inflationary and other consequences of the Barber boom. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman is not well enough informed.

As I have said, we left a lower borrowing requirement than the one that we inherited. We were hit by a recession caused not by our actions but by world economic conditions. The Government have a higher borrowing requirement than the one that they inherited from us.

The impact of the recession is felt in reduced tax receipts from every source—income tax, corporation tax and indirect taxes—and in increased expenditure on support, whether for the unemployed or for the other consequences of recession such as increased deficits and the decreased activity of organisations such as British Rail. The latest figures suggest that every unemployed person

costs about £8,500 in lost Exchequer revenues as well as direct costs. As unemployment is 1·5 million higher than the figure that we left in 1979, that cost alone is about £14 billion. It appears that, far from seeking to alleviate, to counter, the impact of the recession, the Government are merely absorbing its impact, which is all the greater because of their past incompetence.

The Chief Secretary spoke about the overall path of the economy under the Government's stewardship. There, the picture is even more alarming. The figures for the Government's programme contain a cumulative total of unrepeatable revenues of some £205 billion in 1991-92 figures. The Government received £109 billion of revenue from North sea oil and gas, £52 billion in privatisation receipts, £31 billion from council house sales, £8 billion from other local government sales and £5 billion from other central Government sales.

None of those asset sales can be repeated, and they have all helped to make the Government's public expenditure programme rather better than it might otherwise have been. Those huge sums have made up for losses due to our appalling growth record, which has averaged 1·7 per cent. over the Government's years in office compared with the historic trend rate of growth of 2·5 per cent., and that has cost us about £50 billion in lost output over those years.

Before and during the election, the Government claimed that they had delivered increased public expenditure, reduced taxes and a balanced budget. The Chief Secretary claimed that again in his speech. He also repeated the Government's claim that they would do all that again if they were re-elected. As I have said, during the Government's term of office, growth increased by an average of 1·7 per cent. a year. The exclusion of privatisation receipts, which is the only way to measure how the Government have used the resources available to them, shows that public expenditure has grown by an average of 1·3 per cent. per year. There has been a steady squeeze on public sector funds, and the Gracious Speech and the speech by the Chief Secretary confirm that that squeeze will be continued. The Government have expressed the intention to spend less than the country can afford.

Mr. Ian Taylor (Esher): The hon. Lady's lack of credibility on public expenditure is not only that she would have given up all the benefits to the Exchequer from further privatisation proceeds, but that she would also have given up the access to private capital that those companies now have to spend. For example, in the water industry that figure is £30 billion, which is equivalent to the whole of the public sector borrowing requirement. What would the hon. Lady have done about that, having closed off the access to private capital?

Mrs. Beckett: The hon. Gentleman talks about our giving up all the benefits of privatisation revenues. I am sure that at least he is well aware that some privatisation revenues are still due to come in. They will come in and accrue to——

Mr. Taylor: There was a £9 billion hole in the Labour party Budget.

Mrs. Beckett: I assure the hon. Gentleman that he should not go by the figures that have been invented, as the Chief Secretary fairly admitted today, by the Conservative party. Apart from the fact that it is not true that we did not continue to receive some revenues from the privatisations that had already been undertaken, the right hon. Gentleman talked about access to private capital. If he had spent any time studying what the Labour party said as opposed to that which was said by the Conservative party, he would be well aware of our intention to mobilise private capital to help to implement many of the projects that we believed, and still believe, would be worth while.

The consequence of the policy of squeezing public expenditure to less than the country could afford can be seen in the autumn statement in supplement table 8.3. The table shows clearly—the Chief Secretary referred to the levels of asset sales and of investment in the public sector—that, even if we take into account all asset sales, public sector investment in 1991-92 was lower in real terms than in 1978-79. That is despite the fact that even slow growth has given us an economy that is 22·6 per cent. larger.

That is the record of which the right hon. Gentleman boasted. The consequences are evident from figures such as those that are set out in the autumn statement and from the state of housing, schools, hospitals and transport. Nothing in what the Chief Secretary said this afternoon shows how this can be remedied and services improved, when the Gracious Speech and his speech suggest that the squeeze will continue.

The Government's response so far has been to mount diversions—for example, to promote opt-out schools and hospitals. They have introduced changes in organisation instead of increased funds, but in their earlier stages accompanied by the increased funds that the Government said were not needed for the sector overall to ease the path of the changes. How can that increased funding go on being provided when more and more schools and hospitals opt out and when public spending is to continue being squeezed? It is being squeezed not because the funds are necessary for some other reason but, as the Chancellor of the Exchequer told the Select Committee when he was Chief Secretary, to allow room for further cuts in taxes.

I know that the Secretary of State for Social Security is due to reply on behalf of the Government this evening, and I congratulate the right hon. Gentleman on his new post. Billions of pounds of his budget have been wasted in a programme to which the Chief Secretary referred. It is designed to persuade people to take the risk of taking out personal pensions, to accept the risk of taking all the responsibility for their own retirement income on their own shoulders. Apart from the enormous risk, there is less value for money for the individual because of the higher charges and costs that have to be paid.

In addition, as the Audit Commission has stated, there is great cost to the Exchequer. That cost arises to some degree because at present there is still a fallback or a bolthole, and that is returning to the state scheme. I hope that the right hon. Member for St. Albans (Mr. Lilley), in his new capacity of Secretary of State for Social Security, will give the assurance sought on so many occasions from his predecessor, which is that the bolthole will not be closed. I hope also that the right hon. Gentleman will say that those who are tempted by Government propaganda and Government bribes to take out what the Government call a "pension of their own" will not be left high and dry on their own without the fallback of the Government scheme when that becomes in their personal interest.

One of the effects of the squeeze on public finances has been the greater and greater squeeze on the poor. I refer to some of the missing millions who are not mentioned in the

[Mrs. Beckett]

Queen's Speech and whose numbers will be greatly swelled in the decades ahead unless the Secretary of State for Social Security gives the assurance that I have sought. Millions of unemployed people saw their income cut by the social security changes of 1988. Their freedom, choice and opportunity—all words that are used in the Gracious Speech and in the Prime Minister's description of it—are still being reduced under a Government who claim that freedom of choice is their philosophy.

Millions of the homeless and millions of those who are carers are likely to find their task more difficult under the Government's public spending programme. So, too, are the rising numbers of 16 to 18-year-olds and women who are seeking a place in the labour market. Inadequate public services will make their task more difficult.

The social security system over which the right hon. Gentleman will preside does not reduce dependence; it fossilises it. It is geared still to a society of 40 years ago of a man in full-time employment with the same firm for more than 40 years, with a dependant non-working wife and children with easy access to jobs and training. That is the pattern that our social insurance scheme reflects, and it fits neither the work pattern nor the family pattern of today. With the Government's desperation to cut costs at all costs, the present scheme traps those whom it should sustain with dignity when there is no choice or support towards reduced dependence when choice appears.

Conservative Members are often heard to suggest that there are individual alternatives to a social insurance scheme, which pool costs and which offer cover to all. I shall remind them of a case that received only a small amount of publicity just before the general election, when a young woman took the advice of Conservative Members. Fearing that she might lose her job, which was only a temporary contract, she took out private insurance to sustain her mortgage for at least a year while she found a suitable job with pay rates that would enable her to keep her home. She wrote of her shock on discovering that unemployment benefit regulations, changed by the Government, meant that benefit depended on her willingness to take any job after three months, no matter what the financial consequences. That condemned her to lose her home, because the rates of pay she was required to accept would not enable her to meet her mortgage bills.

That woman took the advice of Conservative Members. She did precisely what they had urged on those faced with the danger of repossession. What they offered in advice with one hand, they took away with the other through small-minded social security cuts. They did that because they said that it was not work that was lacking for the unemployed, but the incentive to take any work—no matter how damaging to long-term unemployment prospects or immediate personal circumstances. So much for choice. The effect on that woman's life and the lives of many others in similar circumstances is a consequence of the Government's ideological dislike of any social insurance scheme, combined with the cost pressures imposed by their economic incompetence.

When we consider any aspect of the Government's expenditure plans, we must feel considerable doubt about their promise to improve public services. Their commitments show promised increases of £19 billion in general Government expenditure over the years of the public expenditure plan. They show too—again the Chief Secretary mentioned it today—a reduction in the public sector borrowing requirement, over the years of the plan, to £6 billion by 1996. That requires a turnround of a further £22 billion, so that, just in the years of the plan, total resources of almost £42 billion at 1992-93 prices will be required, without allowing room for any tax cuts.

The revenue projections for the years of the plan suggest available increases of just £21 billion. The hon. Member for Esher (Mr. Taylor) asked me about a potential hole in the Labour party's plans. Perhaps he would care to say something about the hole in the Government's published plans—£20 billion at the very least.

Sir Thomas Arnold (Hazel Grove) *rose*——

Mrs. Beckett: This is a courageous man.

Sir Thomas Arnold: The hon. Lady was a Minister in the last Labour Government. Does she believe that we should be spending our way out of recession?

Mrs. Beckett: According to the Government, they are spending their way out of recession, although I would argue that they are simply relying on the impact of recession on public finances. As the hon. Gentleman may recall, we have proposed a recovery package to help this country out of recession. We have proposed measures, which I shall discuss later, for health and education, which we believe would help to alleviate the impact of the recession. That, however, is not the policy of the hon. Gentleman's Government.

I repeat that the Government's projections suggest that they have a hole in their budget of £20 billion. In fact, measured against the claims that they make for policy, the hole is larger than £20 billion, because, as the former Chief Secretary helpfully explained to the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee, on the Government's own definition balancing the budget does not mean merely removing the borrowing requirement. He made it plain that the Government would require to do more than that if they were to justify their claim to balance the budget. In his evidence to the Select Committee on 25 November 1991, he said:

"The fact is that nothing has been done in this public expenditure round"—

the one that we are discussing now—

"which makes it impossible to return to a balance, indeed throw up a surplus, at the height of the next cycle."

He went on further in his evidence to make it plain that it was the Government's intention, and part of their definition of balancing the budget, to build up a surplus. Therefore, on their own definition, the Government have more than £20 billion to find if they are to balance the budget.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: They might want to privatise the House of Commons.

Mrs. Beckett: I do not think that anyone would pay much for that.

The third clear objective was restated in the Queen's Speech—further cuts in taxes. It is a myth that in the past cuts in income tax resulted in a lower tax charge for the majority of families. I was interested to hear the Chief Secretary repeating again today the argument put from the Conservative Benches which, taken to its logical conclusion, would imply that, if we did not charge any

income tax at all, our revenues would be at an all-time peak. However, I do not think that the Government push the argument that far.

The Chief Secretary referred to the Opposition's lack of understanding, as he put it in his courteous way—that we did not know that reducing tax rates resulted in increased revenues. Perhaps I should gently point out to the Chief Secretary that a substantial body of evidence suggests that, far from it being reduced tax rates that produce the increased revenues, it is the enormous increases that people on the topmost salaries have paid themselves over the years, so that, even with a reduced tax take, they are paying larger contributions. That has also been sustained during the recession.

But for ordinary families, for the majority of families, the cuts in income tax under the Government were almost balanced by increases in national insurance contributions, and were wiped out totally by increases in other taxes—increases in the rate of VAT, the 13 new areas of spending to which VAT was applied and the poll tax, to which I have already referred.

But that, we know, is all behind us. During and before the election campaign, a change of policy was clearly identified. During and before the election, the then Chief Secretary, the Chancellor and the Prime Minister himself were as clear as crystal on the point, and it is important to put it on the record in the House. I remind the House what they promised. They promised no increase in VAT rates, no spread of VAT to areas where it is not now charged and no other new taxes or charges. We mentioned the possibility of school fees or tutorial fees for students, fees for visits to the general practitioner, means-testing of the basic state pension or child benefit. All were denied in terms by the representatives of the Conservative party. They were explicit that none of those developments would occur.

The former Chief Secretary and the Chancellor told us clearly that there was no need at all for any such measures. They said that their figures were all in the public domain —all in the autumn statement—that they all stood up to scrutiny and that their promises would all be delivered.

The Labour party made a number of proposals for tax and spending changes. Those which arise from our tax changes are clearly beyond the reach of what the Government can offer. We offered the restoration of the cuts in the training budget still being undertaken in a recession; a new scheme for the unemployed and for skills training, particularly for women; support through the tax system for manufacturing industry and for research and development for which industry is calling; and the phased release of capital receipts for local authorities, not just to stimulate construction but to provide homes and to save money on bed and breakfast costs.

The Labour party called for a fresh look at the possibility of leasing rolling stock so that British Rail can provide decent trains as well as an improved service and so that Britain's manufacturing industry can survive and prosper. We offered new resources for health and education services. Those were all dependent on our tax plans, and were all a stimulus to counter the recession.

Some of the changes that we proposed are still within the Government's grasp. The money for more city technology colleges could still go to fund nursery places, which would give a better start to far more children and the chance of greater independence to many women.

The subsidies for private health insurance could still be switched to help cancer victims. The poll tax could still be abolished. So could the 20 per cent. contribution, and student loans. All that would save money, and I commend those actions to the Chief Secretary.

As the Government may be looking to make savings apart from the overall figures that I gave, the Chief Secretary may recall an article in *The Guardian*, later backed by independent commentators, suggesting a deficit on current spending for the first time since records began. For that reason alone, the Chief Secretary should forget all the nonsense that the Conservatives churned out during the general election campaign, to the effect that Labour had nothing to offer, and look again at the many sensible proposals that we made for redirecting the public expenditure programme.

There is no doubt that at the heart of the Government's re-election campaign were three clear and simple pledges, which the Chief Secretary repeated today, and which are contained in the Gracious Speech. As to the promise to maintain and to improve public services, the autumn statement, judging from the words of the former Chief Secretary, is the nearest thing to be written on tablets of stone since Moses came down from Mount Sinai. We are assured that there will be no cuts in the public spending programme that was put before the electorate during the general election, and that what was offered will not be eroded—as was the case after the last general election.

The other two promises were to balance the budget—not just reduce borrowing but provide new services—and to make cuts in income tax while not increasing other taxes or inventing new taxes.

In the election campaign, the Conservatives said that they could do it all. The autumn statement supplement offered the Government's credentials and bona fides. That was the platform on which they fought the election, and on which victory was secured.

The Chief Secretary accused us today of leading with our chins in this debate, and said that the autumn statement and the figures that it contains, along with the election result, were an endorsement of the Government's reliability. There is no doubt that the public accepted the Government's assurances that they could deliver better public services, a balanced budget, tax cuts, and no increased or new taxes. The Conservatives are not the first people in recent years to promise all those things to an electorate. Now they must deliver.

3.37 pm

Mr. Tim Smith (Beaconsfield): I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury on his appointment. It is notable that that post was established by Harold Wilson as recently as 1964, reflecting the growth in public spending since the war. In 1964, public spending accounted for 35 per cent. of gross domestic product. That is the target at which we should aim.

I was pleased to hear my right hon. Friend's remarks about the importance of containing public expenditure and of obtaining value for money. I wish him well in the forthcoming public spending round, which we all know will not be an easy one. I congratulate also my hon. Friends the Financial Secretary and the Economic Secretary on their appointments. They both bring special

[Mr. Tim Smith]

expertise to the Treasury. We now have in place an extremely competent Treasury team. I wish all of them well in managing the economy over the next few years.

We on the Conservative Benches attach great important to that aspect, as do the electorate—as was seen in the result of the recent general election. The Government's competence to manage the economy was the principal factor that led people to vote Conservative in such large numbers on 9 April. Listening to the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett), I was struck by how few lessons she appears to have learnt from the election result. I wonder whether she actually listened to what anyone said to her during the election campaign.

Is it not extraordinary that the Labour party should try to lecture us on the importance of fiscal rectitude? Of course we all understand the importance of containing the public sector borrowing requirement; of course we all think that £28 billion, or £32 billion, is too high a figure for next year—although it can be justified at a time of deep recession. It is preposterous, however, that the hon. Lady of all people, given her record, should lecture us on the importance of such matters.

I am always struck by the way in which people assume that whatever is happening at the present time will continue apace for ever and a day. After all, only four years ago we had a public sector debt repayment of £15 billion, and at the time some people told us—perhaps rather too enthusiastically and with too much optimism—that, if we carried on in the same way, we would be able to repay the whole of the national debt by the year 2000. I never supposed that that would happen; but, on the other hand, I do not suppose that we shall have a public sector borrowing requirement this size for every year between now and the year 2000.

We all know that the public sector borrowing requirement is the difference between two very large figures, and we all know that public spending and the income from revenue are directly affected by the state of the economy. Although we want the figure to be reduced as quickly as possible, we all understand why we have a PSBR of this size at present.

The hon. Lady, of course, said nothing about Labour's manifesto, with its long list of public spending commitments for which she was responsible. I am sorry that she left the Chamber so quickly——

Madam Speaker: Order. I ought to inform the hon. Gentleman and the House that the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) has apologised to me, and let the hon. Gentleman know that he will also receive an apology. The hon. Lady has a long-standing engagement.

Mr. Smith: I am most grateful to you, Madam Speaker. I would have expected nothing else from the hon. Member for Derby, South, who is always most courteous in regard to such matters.

The hon. Lady was responsible for the many public spending pledges in the Labour manifesto. The people asked, understandably, where the money would come from to pay for all those pledges. If Labour Members cannot answer that question—and it has never been answered—what is the point of putting all those pledges into their manifesto?

I am also struck by the fact that, although people tell opinion pollsters that they are prepared to pay extra taxes to fund extra public spending, that is never entirely borne out in the results on polling day. I suspect that what most people want—it is an entirely understandable aspiration—are lower taxes and higher public spending. Only the present Government, on the back of economic growth throughout the 1980s, actually delivered that and only the present Government are capable of delivering it in the future.

Ms. Hilary Armstrong (Durham, North-West): I am very interested in what the hon. Gentleman has said. Can he now, on behalf of his party, commit the Government to meeting all their public expenditure pledges and reducing taxes?

Mr. Smith: The Government's position is set out very clearly in the "Autumn Statement", covering the next three years. The hon. Lady does not need to ask me that question; she will be able to see the position for herself if she obtains a copy of the "Autumn Statement" from the Vote Office. My personal view is that something that has been successfully achieved during the 1980s can be achieved again.

Ms. Armstrong: It has not been achieved.

Mr. Smith: The hon. Lady says that it has never been achieved, but income tax was cut from 30 per cent. to 25 per cent. at a time when public expenditure was rising and the public sector borrowing requirement was falling. If it has been done before, it can be done again, and it will be done again when the economy starts to recover.

Mr. Skinner: When will that happen?

Mr. Smith: It will happen during the 1990s. The hon. Gentleman knows very well that no one can be sure precisely when such things will happen, but I am confident that it will come about.

I welcome the commitment in the Queen's Speech to sound finance and budgetary discipline in another context. The paragraph about the European Community states that, as part of the United Kingdom's presidency of the Council, the Government will

"promote sound finance and budgetary discipline."

I believe that the need for that is urgent and that we are well placed to do it.

On many occasions, the European Community Court of Auditors has produced reports that are highly critical of spending in the Community, particularly on the common agricultural policy. I hope that the Government will take measures to see that we have effective mechanisms, just as we have in the House with Select Committees, including the Public Accounts Committee, to ensure that public spending in the Community means that taxpayers throughout the Community get value for money.

I welcome the statement in the paragraph dealing with the overseas aid programme which says that the Government

"will continue to press creditor countries for a further reduction in the official debt of the poorest countries."

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister is to be congratulated on the initiative that he has already taken. The Government have been leading the way. I hope that, over the coming months, it will be possible for the Government to persuade other western countries to cancel entirely the official debt of the poorest and least developed

countries. It is not just a moral issue; it involves our economic interest as well as that of the poorest people in those countries. I attach the greatest importance to that commitment.

I welcome the strong statement in the Queen's Speech —it may be the first for some time—in which there is an explicit reference to price stability. We are told that the

"Government will pursue, within the framework of the exchange rate mechanism, firm financial policies designed to achieve price stability.

For too long we have been satisfied with low inflation. It is good news that today we have low inflation and that inflation is containable. However, it is nearly a quarter of a century since we had one year in which the United Kingdom had stable prices. I am glad that the Government have committed themselves firmly to the objective of squeezing inflation out of the system altogether. It is inflation that destroys jobs, undermines savings and business confidence and negates economic growth.

Mr. Mark Wolfson (Sevenoaks): In support of his point, does my hon. Friend agree that within the ERM our European competitors—in this context, I mean competitors rather than partners—are likely to be more successful in containing inflation than they have been in the past and that, to maintain our competitive position and jobs here, it is even more important than ever that we squeeze inflation out of the system?

Mr. Smith: I agree with my hon. Friend. That is borne out by recent experience in Italy and, particularly in France since they joined the ERM. Although the experience has been painful, it has been worth while. We have seen inflation across the Community fall as a result of ERM policies.

United Kingdom membership of the ERM is only 20 months old and the benefits of that membership are now showing through strongly. One of the most underrated benefits is the fact that it brings about exchange rate stability within the Community. It means that people who trade within the Community—after all, the majority of our trade is now with other Community countries—are able to forecast the exchange rate in currency transactions with a degree of certainty that did not exist before. That is good news for British industry and British exporters.

The key point is that the ERM provides an external discipline that ensures that we bring inflation down and keep it down. We have brought down inflation and underlying inflation—output prices are at record lows—and as a result, when we believe that it is prudent to do so, we can bring down interest rates. I welcome the fact that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor felt able to make a further cut of 0·5 per cent. on Monday. We have now seen interest rates fall by 5 per cent. since their peak in October 1990 when, not coincidentally, we joined the ERM. That is good news for us. Also, I hope that when Treasury Ministers feel that it is appropriate, we will be able to move to the narrow bands of the ERM. Perhaps that will be possible when sterling has traded for a reasonable time within those bands. That will reinforce our commitment to the ERM and facilitate the further lowering of interest rates.

The Queen's Speech also refers to the convergence criteria in the Maastricht agreement. I welcome the Government's commitment in the medium term to complying with the convergence criteria, which relate principally to inflation, interest rates and fiscal policy. Because of the Government's prudent handling of the economy, there should be no difficulty in meeting those criteria. For example, the criterion on official debt stipulates that such debt must be no more than 60 per cent. of GDP in total. The United Kingdom level is far below that, whereas that of, say, Italy, is far above it.

I welcome the fact—although it is largely attributable to the Labour party leadership election—that we are to have a debate on public expenditure at this stage in the parliamentary year. That debate normally takes place after the publication of the White Paper. Today we have an opportunity to comment on public expenditure in the next spending round, which is about to start.

I suspect that my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary will start his discussions, especially with the Department of the Environment, quite soon. All the discussions on the next public spending round will start soon. In this debate we shall be able to express our views on public spending in 1993-94.

In that context, the first thing to say is that it is clearly vital to contain the overall level of public spending. That is the easy part. We can all say that, and then we go to my right hon. Friend and tell him which part of public spending should be increased, because we have a special interest in that subject. I do not suppose that my right hon. Friend receives very many recommendations on which areas of public spending could be reduced.

The first stage in the process is the announcement made at the end of July on local authority spending—the local authority settlement for 1993-94. That is an important settlement, because next year will see the introduction of the council tax and of care in the community, and the transfer from the social security budget to local authority budgets of that amount of social security spending which is attributable to care in the community.

I hope that at that time it will be possible for my right hon. Friend to identify the sum which is notionally being transferred from the Department of Social Security to local authorities, so that local authorities have a clear idea how much it is. I am prepared to forecast now that whatever that sum is local authorities will say that it is insufficient—but that is not my point. The point is that the sum should be clearly identified. From April next year, local authorities are to be given substantial new responsibilities under care in the community. That means that we shall have to examine the standard spending assessment in relation to social services.

Some counties, including my own, which manage to contain total spending within the standard spending assessment still have difficulty with social services. My hon. Friends know what pressures there are on social services budgets—and those pressures are likely to increase rather than to decrease following the introduction of care in the community.

I fully support what my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary says about securing value for money in public spending. That is what the citizens charter is all about—value for money and quality service for the customers of the Government's services.

Another factor on which I am sure that my right hon. Friend will agree with me—although he did not mention it —is the introduction of the Government agency programme. We now distinguish clearly between policy advice and policy execution, which means that we are in a position to give better value for money to customers of

[Mr. Smith]

Government services. I hope that that programme will be developed further—especially in the Departments in which it has not yet been introduced—so that eventually all civil servants and officials working in policy execution will be working for agencies with considerable independence of management. That is how we shall get better value for money for all our taxpayers.

3.53 pm

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead): I begin my contribution in a similar vein to those we have heard this afternoon in congratulating you, Madam Speaker, on your appointment. I then wish to develop a speech that is rather different from those I have heard so far.

There are at least two ways to cover a canvas: the broad brush stroke can be applied or a far more detailed brush can be applied to the canvas. I wish to adopt a more detailed approach in taking up two themes that have already, rightly, dominated the debate: incentives, and the issue about people controlling their own lives. I want to develop those themes with the small brush approach, thinking of individuals in my constituency and, as a result of joint canvassing, in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Wallasey (Ms. Eagle).

I speak at the beginning of a Parliament when the Labour party has lost four elections in a row. I do not belong to the school that believes that, with one more small heave, we shall be on the Treasury Benches. In terms of our percentage of the vote, our turnout was worse than it was in 1935. In responding to speeches, we have the double job of performing our role as the Opposition and trying to convince the Government to change policy when that is desirable, and of beginning a rethink of policy ourselves in a build-up to the general election five years hence. I want to begin that task this afternoon.

I hope that before long we shall be seen as a tax-cutting party, not because we just want to beat the Government at their own game, but because it is vital if we are to build real incentives for those at the bottom of the pile.

We have heard much about public expenditure, about its restraints, and about the difficulties of balancing the increased provision of first-class public services with the Government's objective of cutting taxation. What we have not heard about in the debate—I hope that we shall hear a lot more about it—is the growth of the other welfare state, the tax welfare state. It is now so generous that it omits from taxation more than half of all personal income. We should now begin to set out a stall to commit ourselves to phasing out those tax handouts. That cannot be done at a stroke because people have made major commitments, such as buying pensions or their own homes, and their budgets would be split asunder if such measures were carried out at a stroke.

However, there could be commitments over the life of a Parliament to phase out some of the major tax benefits. I pick out two. If we or the Government were committed to phasing out mortgage tax relief and the subsidies that go with the acquiring of pensions, by the end of a Parliament we could cut the standard rate from 25p to 18p in the pound. I believe that that is right for a number of reasons. It is right because we should cease to be paternalistic—believing that only if we bribe people shall we get them to buy houses or provide pensions. They will do that if they have enough income with which to do so because they are good things to buy.

Such a change is also right because it would create a level playing field for savings. One now has to be almost certifiable to save in any way other than buying one's own home or pension, given the extent of the tax subsidies. Such a change is right because it achieves the goal of cutting the standard rate. I think of the standard rate especially as it affects low-wage earners in my constituency and in Wallasey where the difference between 18p and 25p per pound of tax paid is very important.

One of the policies that I hope we shall press on the Government is to be genuinely non-paternalistic and to be genuine about seeking major cuts in the standard rate of tax. I want to achieve the objectives I have outlined and I take seriously the question that we often mouth in this Chamber—I wonder how seriously we take it—when we look at the wage slips of the low-paid workers in our constituencies and see how crippling some of those contributions are.

I congratulate the Secretary of State for Social Security on his post, and I am glad that he will reply to the debate. I link my plea to another plea about caution, although having an open mind about the targeting of benefits. It is no longer good enough for us to mouth all those phrases which, in a very comfortable way, we have uttered in the Chamber over the past three or so Parliaments. The recipe is not to the liking of the electorate. That does not mean that we will desert all our positions, but it means that we have to rethink from first principles again. Therefore, I am not against opening up the debate, as some Conservative Members have put it, about universal provision and targeted provision, but I wish to make a plea before we jump too quickly or carelessly into the debate, because we could with one hand tend to undo the good that the other hand may do.

I refer again to a typical constituent of my hon. Friend the Member for Wallasey and myself. He works a considerable time when work is available and picks up nearly £40 in family credit. He is grateful for that family credit—he makes no bones about it; the family would not survive without that payment. However, he is well aware of what we in the Chamber call his marginal tax rates—the amount that is taken in income tax, the amount that is taken in national insurance contributions, the loss of family credit as his earnings increase, and other deductions as well on housing benefit.

Therefore, when we talk about the nice, easy move from universal provision to selective or targeted provision, we must think of what we are doing to people at the bottom of the pile. Although, sadly, we now have an underclass —perhaps there will be other debates in which I may develop that theme—large numbers of other people are poor simply because, by their own efforts, they cannot get a job or there is no job to have. For example, in the Wirral a new Sainsbury store is opening. The company took pages in our free press to advertise just before the election. For every job that was advertised, however skilled, a breadwinner with two children would still earn a low enough wage to claim family credit.

Employers are adapting to the means-tested assistance that is being given. They are becoming dependent on that form of Government support, and our constituents are being trapped in it. They have to think whether they get another job or work longer hours, given what their

marginal tax rates are and given what the Government have already done on changing the housing benefit scheme, whereby an unemployed person on income support has the whole of his rent paid, but, because the income scales were changed for those in work, people now move from having rent totally paid when they are unemployed to an income which is hardly any different when they are in work, but facing practically the whole of their rent charges. Therefore, a council tenant paying a large rent such as those that we have in the Wirral has now to be patriotic beyond belief to move from unemployment to work, other than finding himself in the position of making his family worse off.

Those are real conditions that our constituents must face. I make the plea that, when we open the debate about the future shape of welfare, we do not do so just on an intellectual level but use one of the great resources that each of us has, and that is that we represent an area in this country and that we listen to what our constituents say, particularly those who will be most affected by the changes. There is all the difference in the world between keeping a universal provision of child benefit, which is a springboard to freedom, and thinking about how more selective one might be in future about making above-the-board increases in the standard rate of the old-age pension.

I am taking much time, but I wish to end on one other theme if I may, and that is pensioners. I wish to open up two themes briefly. The House is awaiting the Government's response to the Select Committee report on the ownership and control of pension funds. Way back in 1976, I thought that the Labour party should advocate the sale of council houses. Unfortunately, it was not a view which my party accepted. We now have an opportunity of extending capital ownership on the pensions front which makes the sale of council houses small beer. I am talking about the equity stake that most of us have through our pension scheme. Most of us do not realise that we have any asset there at all. If one worked for Robert Maxwell, one realises that one does not.

A person on average earnings approaching retirement, will have a portfolio of about £100,000 to support his or her pension, yet no one thinks that he owns that £100,000. None of us thinks that collectively through our pension funds we own about a third of the stock market. If we are to achieve the next big leap forward in people having control of their own assets and having the right to move those assets from one pension fund to another accepted body, I hope that the recommendations in the Select Committee will be accepted.

I end as I began, on a sombre note. I make a plea about those pensioners who thought that they had assets in Maxwell-run pension schemes only to find out that the funds were either sadly depleted or non-existent. I know that the Government are thinking about what their response will be. I make an immediate plea to the Government. I do not expect the Government to say this evening that they will underwrite all those pension funds, but they could say that they will give a conditional undertaking to underwrite on a month-by-month basis those funds which now find that they are not solvent and, therefore, must close.

The Government know the disadvantages of schemes closing. Not only are pensions lost but the body which seeks to trace the assets which may have been misappropriated disappears with the closure of the scheme. So there is a real need to pump money on a short-term basis into such schemes so that pensions can be paid. But there is also a longer term objective. Through the schemes we may retrieve some of the assets and give them back to the pensioners who own them.

It is not simply a matter of people losing their pension. Many of us in the House will know from our constituents who are Maxwell pensioners that with the loss of their pension goes the loss of their home. Pensioners have to sell their homes because they do not have the monthly income to keep them going. So before many more schemes close —one closed two weeks ago—I hope that the Government will respond, not in a universal way but in a selective way, to ensure that while they are thinking about the longer term reforms no more pension schemes go to the wall. With the closure of a pension scheme, people face the horror of losing not only the whole of their provision for retirement but their other greatest asset, their house.

Mr. Wolfson: I support in the strongest terms the point that the hon. Gentleman is making. I have experience of several constituents who, in some cases, worked for 37 years for a company which was not part of the Maxwell group but was taken over in the last three years of their employment. They now have no pension whatever. We need to keep open all possible gates to retrieving those funds.

Mr. Field: I am grateful for the hon. Gentleman's support. I hope that those on the Treasury Bench listened most carefully to his comments.

Labour Members have difficulties in approaching the Queen's Speech after our fourth election defeat. I hope that in the next year or so we shall use the debates in the House, both to criticise and probe the Government, as we rightly should, and to open up the debate about what our policy should be so that in five years' time we shall not suffer five losses in a row.

4.9 pm

Mr. Peter Fry (Wellingborough): I am delighted to be called so early in the debate on the Queen's Speech, particularly because it enables me to join in the congratulations to you, Madam Speaker, on your well merited promotion to the Chair. I should also like to take the opportunity publicly to congratulate my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary and his colleagues on their promotion to the Treasury Front Bench.

As so often, the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) produced a thoughtful speech. I should not like him to think that only constituencies in the north-west of England experience the problems that he outlined. Some of the ideas in his speech will cause much thought, not least on the Opposition Benches.

I reinforce the hon. Gentleman's comments about the terrible trap into which people fall, particularly when they are unemployed and have families to support. He mentioned those who pay council house rents. I hope that my right hon. Friend appreciates that a considerable number of people live in the private sector where rents are often much higher than in the council house sector, and where the pressure on people is even greater. Even with the family credit system, many of them would find it not worth working at all. The pressure exists throughout the housing sector for those who do not own their own homes.

[Mr. Peter Fry]

The hon. Member for Birkenhead also spoke about pensioners, particularly those who were let down by the collapse of the Maxwell empire. The Conservative party has a great obligation to ensure that people who take out private pensions receive them. It is not much good for us to say that we have an alternative to the state scheme and that we want people to stand on their own feet. We must ensure that when people have contributed money from their earnings and when firms have also contributed to pension schemes, those pensions are realised when they are due. There will be all-party agreement on both those points.

At the start of debates on the Queen's Speech, comments are always made about the election. I should just like to put in one little caveat to the euphoria that exists in the Conservative party. I must admit that, going round the country as I did, I did not find that the support for me and my party was based on unqualified approbation for everything that had happened over the past two years. The Government should accept that we were chosen as the best possible alternative—perhaps the least of all the available evils.

I think that that lesson has been learnt, and I welcome many of the measures contained in the Queen's Speech. We are entering a period when there may be less political strife and bickering than in the past 12 months. There is a feeling in the country that political bickering does no good in getting us out of the recession. Now that the election is behind us, people expect the Government to get on with the job of helping industry, helping to create jobs and helping people to raise their standard of living once again.

I was impressed that my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary took as his theme value for money. Rather like the hon. Member for Birkenhead, I should like to look in a little more detail at one aspect of public expenditure. I was pleased to read in the Queen's Speech that the Government were committed to increasing the role of the railways in meeting the country's transport needs. However, I was not too happy to note that that was the only reference to the problems of the country's transport needs. The problem goes much wider than merely privatising part of British Rail.

While I am on the subject, I congratulate the Government on at long last grasping the nettle and dealing with how to bring competition into rail services and, at the same time, covering the cares and concerns of many people about what would happen if the whole system were privatised.

Sixteen or 17 years ago, I was a member of the Conservative party's transport policy committee when we first proposed the idea of separating the maintenance and ownership of the track from the operation of rail services on it. I am only too pleased that, at long last, that idea has been accepted by my right hon. Friends. The new regime that we set up for British Rail and the rail services can only benefit the country, the consumer and I hope, public expenditure as well.

However, the problem that has not been touched on, and which is fundamental, is that of how we shall deal with one of the greatest sources of waste and environmental pollution that exists in our society. How are we to use public expenditure to do something about the appalling traffic congestion in our major cities? The Government have already done a remarkable amount. I discovered that many people were totally unaware of the Government's achievements, and the fact that some imaginative schemes have been proposed and commenced for heavy rail systems, particularly in London.

There are light rail schemes, which are virtually 100 per cent. funded by the taxpayer, in Sheffield, Manchester and Birmingham. Many more schemes are queueing up to be approved. We have the biggest plan for inter-urban road building that the country has ever seen, which is surely important to ensure our economic recovery.

However, we have not yet resolved the problem caused by the massive public expenditure that will be needed to cope with the congestion that is becoming an everyday occurence, not only in the big cities, but in medium-sized towns. London is a special case, and I do not want to consider its problems at the moment, but I have been impressed by the fact that, if we are not careful and do not obtain value for money when we spend taxpayers' cash up and down the country, that will cost us much more in the future, not least in the environmental impact that the over-use of motor cars and lorries will have.

Some hon. Members will be surprised to hear me make such comments as, over the years, I have been known as a supporter of the road lobby, and I believe that roads play a fundamental part in the national economy. However, when we are dealing with the problems of urban centres, road building alone cannot be the solution. It is politically unacceptable, and the cost is too heavy. We have to ask ourselves, in the words of the Chief Secretary to the Treasury, "How will we get value for money?"

If we embark on enormously expensive schemes, they will take up money that could be used elsewhere. They also take a long time to complete and, as the former Secretary of State for Transport, Mr. Parkinson, said, if one conducts too many schemes at any one time in any one place, the ensuing chaos makes them counter-productive. We could turn to more of the light rail schemes that have been promoted, but it is my view that the number of those schemes that are viable is limited and that there is a danger that too many of them are being promoted merely to advance the aspirations of some local authorities. The problem remains.

I noted that the new Secretary of State for Transport said once again that the Government were considering road pricing. I warn my right hon. Friend that, just as many people who responded to the opinion polls before the election made monkeys of the pollsters, so there is a danger of assuming that, when people answer that they are in favour of road pricing and deliberately restricting the use of motor cars, that is what people actually think.

The second most important purchase that most people make after their house is their car. Having bought it, they are going to use it. The problem facing much of the western world is not stopping people buying and using cars but persuading them to use them less often—in other words, using public expenditure to persuade people voluntarily to leave their cars in the garage or to use park and ride operations.

I have not yet mentioned the one form of public transport that can make the greatest contribution to solving traffic congestion: the bus. The trouble with the bus is that it has a down-market image. Years ago, we used to talk about the man on the Clapham omnibus as the fount of all wisdom, the man whose opinion should be taken as the average view. Alas, today, too many

passengers on the Clapham omnibus are pensioners or those on concessionary fares, children going to school or people on low incomes, not traditionally the groups whose opinions are first taken into account when decisions are made.

I suggest that, if my right hon. Friends want value for money from public expenditure on public transport, they should take a good look at ways in which they can exploit the bus, rather than devoting hundreds of millions of pounds to schemes that can offer only limited relief.

There are those who ask why we should make such a fuss about the bus; surely now that the bus companies have been deregulated, they can sort out the problems for themselves. I venture to suggest that they cannot. First, traffic is already too bad, and only the Government at national and local level can alter the rules to give the bus greater priority. That needs to be done.

Secondly, if higher income groups are to use this form of public transport, they must have a convenient system —a clean, comfortable and swift system. At the moment, it is virtually impossible for bus companies to purchase the kind of new buses they want. The bus building industry in this country has virtually collapsed in recent years. Treasury Ministers must re-examine the regime under which many bus companies operate, to enable them to produce the profits with which to buy better, cleaner and more modern vehicles.

Thirdly, we must look seriously at the regime in which we expect our public transport operators to run their services. I was privileged a couple of months ago to go to Brazil. Hon. Members may wonder what on earth Brazil could teach us about public transport, but they may be interested to learn that the finest system of buses that I have seen anywhere in the world is to be found in the city of Curitiba, in southern Brazil. With the right sort of investment, that town is achieving levels of service as good as those provided by light rail systems in many other parts of the world; at the same time, it has successfully enabled people to leave their cars at home and move around the city without causing enormous traffic jams.

We should examine other systems. I hope that the Treasury will allow the Minister for Public Transport to go and have a good look at how other countries are solving their problems. It is not necessary to spend enormous sums on heavy or light rail or even on road building. We need, as the Chief Secretary said, to choose the right priorities. By choosing them wisely much can be achieved, we can obtain value for money and our appalling traffic congestion can be relieved.

I hope that, when the Secretary of State replies to the debate, he will deal with the vexed question of the future of care in the community. There is considerable unease, especially in the private residential homes sector, about what will happen over the next two years as a result of the change in funding for people who cannot look after themselves. County councils are currently presenting their broad outline plans, but they cannot say exactly how those plans will be implemented, because they do not know how much money they will receive.

I hope that the Secretary of State is aware that many thousands of elderly people are quite happy to remain in residential care. However, a shadow is being thrown over them because of the uncertainty of future funding. One of the greatest assurances that my right hon. Friend can give is that those people will not suddenly find, because of a change in county council policy as a result of a vast reduction in funding, that they will not know where they will stay when the new system is introduced. If care in the community is to be placed at the forefront of our social policies, it is essential to find the public expenditure to enable the policies to be carried out, to the satisfaction and happiness of thousands of our elderly citizens.

4.26 pm

Mr. Matthew Taylor (Truro): I should like to repeat in public the private congratulations that I offered you, Madam Speaker, when I took my seat. The House looks forward to your continuing stewardship. The overwhelming vote of confidence in you was a measure of the respect for the work that you carried out when you were Deputy Speaker.

The speech by the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) failed to address the reality of the position of all the Opposition parties. The hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) gave a rather more honest appraisal of the situation facing all of us who want to see not just a change of Government in the near future but, perhaps more importantly, the effective operation of democracy in this country.

In the weeks following 9 April, journalists, political commentators and politicians have advised, preached and speculated on the lessons that the Labour party and my party have to learn from the election result. There are certainly lessons to be learned, and the challenge is to provide an effective alternative. That means an alternative vision which is backed by practical, affordable policies. At this stage in the Parliament it is not enough for any Opposition Member simply to address the political situation as if those questions did not arise.

I am sure that, privately within the Labour party, those questions are being widely discussed, but in the past few days the tone of some of Labour's public comment on recent Government policy has failed to acknowledge that problem. That is not to say that the policies presented by my party and by Labour did not prove popular. Many Liberal Democrat policies and the positive way in which they were presented proved popular. Our pledge to invest more in education, even at the price of 1p on income tax, was the most popular policy of the campaign. We must also make it clear that a Liberal Democrat vote means Liberal Democrat policies, and fortunately people voting in today's local elections understand that. That will result in a record number of Liberal Democrat councillors and a record number of Liberal Democrat-led councils.

The Opposition parties have lessons to learn and thinking to do, but so do the Government. Indeed, a Government with such a reduced majority have the greatest responsibility to learn the lessons of the election and to consider what the citizens were saying. It is not enough to claim a mandate on a minority of votes or even on a small majority of seats in the House. Yet the Queen's Speech and the Prime Minister's comments yesterday suggest no such new thinking.

Shortly before the election campaign, I received a letter from the Prime Minister. It outlined, somewhat sketchily, his vision for the future and expressed the hope that I might share his views. It even suggested that I might contact the Truro Conservative association to see whether I could help in any way. I imagine that many members of the public received the same letter. No doubt the Conservative central office computer targeted it at those

[Mr. Matthew Taylor]

who were considered to be likely Tory voters, probably those in jobs with good incomes and with reasonable job security.

I wonder whether the Prime Minister sent his letter to the unemployed, to those whose homes have been repossessed, to old people struggling on the state pension or to those on health waiting lists. I doubt whether that was the intention, but it is those people who are most dependent on the Government's policies. Many of them will not have voted Conservative but some will have done so, perhaps in the shaky hope that they can rely on the Government to put things right. It is more likely, perhaps, that they did so because they were afraid that, with a Labour Government, their position might be even worse.

The Government have a duty especially to help those who for fear of anything else—another Government—put their trust in them. It was the Tories who fought a campaign to create that fear. Many of those who voted for them did so, as the hon. Member for Wellingborough (Mr. Fry) rightly said, not out of any enthusiasm for what had happened over the past few years under Conservative Governments but out of a fear—in my view, it was in part misplaced but in the Conservative party's view the fear was justified—of the options that were on offer. I do not believe that there was any great endorsement of Government policy. That being so, Conservative Members cannot afford to be self-satisfied about the Conservative election victory that was won on less than half the votes cast. They need to show that they deserved the victory, but there is little sign of that in the Queen's Speech.

During the election campaign, the so-called citizens charter was trumpeted as the flagship for a Tory Government. It appears, however, that no legislation is planned that would put citizens in charge of what takes place. No money is committed to giving the charter any bite. The Queen's Speech appears to be that of a Government who did not expect to be re-elected.

What are the plans to improve public services and how will they be funded? The subject of today's debate is public expenditure, but we have not heard how the Government will improve investment in basic public services. During the election, I believe that my party won the debate on education because the public recognised that the service could be improved only with substantial extra investment and that there was an honesty in explaining that that meant that they would have to pay for it.

The Labour party failed to bring the two components together. It gave the impression that it believed that the public could be persuaded that almost too much could be given at no cost to them. The Government said that it would cost, as it were, but failed to recognise that there was a mood to meet that cost or to face some of the costs that would be involved, provided that the public knew what it was that they were voting for and precisely what the costs would be. The poll evidence showed precisely that, when the issue was put together in that form—the potential benefits and an accurate indication of the costs involved—the public would support it, as they supported the 1p increase in income tax that was proposed by the Liberal Democrat party.

How, for example, do Ministers intend to ensure that we have a high-quality train service, never mind who owns or operates parts of it? How do they intend to ensure that vital health operations are carried out quickly and well? How will they ensure that parents can be guaranteed high-quality education for their children in all instances and not only in flagship schools? How will they ensure that disabled people have access to the services and support that they need; and that care in the community can be made a high-quality reality delivering the support that people have been promised?

The Government say that they will provide improved services, but the financial equation fails to add up. The Government have also made other various spending commitments to index-link pensions, to child benefit and to a Department of Trade and Industry run by a more interventionist Secretary of State—who has made it clear that he will want additional cash. As more schools opt out, it will be in the expectation that they will receive the additional financial support that those which have already opted out have received.

Alongside those spending commitments, the Government have pledged further tax cuts and have said that their intention is to balance the books. Given the present and projected levels of borrowing, how can balanced books be achieved without cuts in services, let alone cuts in the promises that the Government have made? Indeed, it has already emerged that the Government projections assume too high a level of growth. More realistic assessments of growth suggest that borrowing will need to be even higher to meet the expenditure plans.

There have already been widely leaked projections for the coming public expenditure round, and cuts are expected. The services that will be hit will be the health service, education and community care—the very services about which the election showed people care most. Education authorities and governing bodies already face the prospect of having to sack teachers and cut the delivery of education to children in the classrooms. Over the next few months, the unwritten home truths about the Government's general election campaign will emerge. While the Government were effective in raising fear of the alternative, they were hugely ineffective in explaining the contradictions within their manifesto. That can mean only broken promises and further cuts.

How do the Government intend to lift our country out of recession and into sustained recovery? In my part of the world, we are well aware that natural growth, coming out of the few early signs that we are now seeing, will do nothing to tackle the deep-rooted problems of the British economy as a whole, and more specifically those of areas such as mine where, no matter how well the economy performs, there are always lower wages, higher unemployment and fewer prospects for young people.

We sought to present a costed manifesto that dealt with those problems—a manifesto aimed at recovery and investment in vital services such as school and college building programmes, housing schemes and NHS building, with investment that would create jobs while improving basic services. Whatever the result of the election, I believe that those policies were popular. As I toured the towns and villages, not only in my constituency but in areas where we did less well, the message I received was one of concern about schools, the health service, pensions and the sewage on our beaches.

There was uncertainty about whether people could risk the alternative that was offered to tackle those problems, but there was no uncertainty about the reality of those

problems and the need for them to be tackled. It appears that the Government would rather ignore those concerns in order to achieve a tax cut. Why the obsession with tax cuts? The only way to achieve them will be through cuts in education and job creation and through further environmental decline. The economy needs new ideas and new investment if we are to emerge from the recession and if our long-term needs are to be met.

I shall cite a local example. Last July a Trade and Industry Minister told me that he recognised the case for Truro and St. Austell to receive assisted area status and a review was promised—but not until after the general election. Local people keenly await the result of that review, but it will call for additional investment by the Government. Cornwall has some of the highest levels of unemployment in the country. We need the benefits of assisted area status, combined with a development agency for that county, to bring us out of recession. The decision must be made now.

The Government know that they have campaigned on an agenda that means that they cannot possibly deliver the required investment while delivering cuts in taxes and the balanced economy that they have promised to deliver—at least, not unless they are prepared to go down the road suggested by the hon. Member for Birkenhead and attack tax benefits and privileges, including mortgage tax relief. Having stood for a party that talked about such reform, I know that the Government have been only too keen to exploit the subject without examining the issues that underlie such a programme. The Government will be judged on their determination to act on those matters.

The Queen's Speech contains many small actions, but fails to face up to the great acts, the great reforms, that Britain needs. Even the Government's narrow ambitions are undermined by the financial crisis and the self-imposed financial limitations which they face and which they still do not allow themselves even to acknowledge in public let alone face. That is the truth of the Government's programme, and that is why it should be opposed.

4.40 pm

Mr. Ian Taylor (Esher): I congratulate you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on your new position. We look forward to you holding the fort on many occasions such as this when the House is not quite as full of hon. Members who wish to speak as you, in your position as Mr. Deputy Speaker, might wish. Nevertheless, I am delighted to take part in this debate on the Gracious Speech.

From my experience in my constituency, I believe that the problem with the Liberal Democrats' plan, which was mentioned by the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor), for 1p on income tax to fund education was that progressively during the campaign it was regarded as a gimmick. The principle of such an hypothecated tax does not stand up to examination, because ultimately the question arises: does everything have to be hypothecated? Why not have an extra 1p for something else and something else more? The idea also looked increasingly feeble in comparison with what the Government were already predicting that they would spend in Red Book proposals for the forthcoming financial years. Therefore, even on that basis the Liberal Democrats' proposal did not answer the question.

After the Liberal Democrats' sorry showing in the election, they will have to go a good deal deeper than that sort of exercise to win votes. I am not questioning the fact that education is important; I am merely saying that there is a much bigger debate about how to finance public services, including education, and the answer is not to hypothecate tax in that way.

I shall return to some of the broader themes but I do not want to miss the opportunity to pay tribute to the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field). I shall not embarrass him by praising him too much—that might not be what he is seeking. However, I suspect that he embarrassed the Opposition Front-Bench spokesmen. Certainly, the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) would have done better to speak after the hon. Gentleman—that might have improved her own speech. I am sorry that she is not here to hear my comments, but listening to her speak one began to understand why the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) considered that it would be a disaster if she were to succeed in her attempt to become deputy leader of the Labour party. There was no new thinking there. She spent most of her time trying to justify the Labour party's election campaign which so visibly failed to obtain the support of the British people. There was no message for the future non-Conservative forces, which may be seeking to coalesce in order to make a better attempt against the Conservative party at the next general election, whenever that might be.

One of the more interesting debates within the Labour party at the moment concerns the interpretation of its platform on the Budget during the election campaign. I was interested in the fact that the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) made a trenchant attack on the proposals of the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith), saying that what had crucially affected the Labour party's chances in the south of England—those who come from Scotland should remember that there are quite a few people in the south-east and south-west of England and in the midlands, as the hon. Member for Dagenham also pointed out—was its fatal capping of the aspirations of those people who were not earning as much as £20,000 per annum but who saw no good reason why they should not earn that much as their careers developed.

Before the Labour party preaches to the country, it is crucial that it should understand that, during the past 13 years of Conservative government, the country has changed and people do not necessary feel that they will always be at the bottom of the heap. They have a chance to improve themselves in all sorts of ways, not only through their earnings but through the houses that they purchase and the investments that they make, including pensions, which the hon. Member for Birkenhead rightly said was the great hidden asset of most British people, to which they pay least attention, but which is of great significance and magnitude.

We must understand that the British people do not like being taxed at levels higher than they regard as reasonable and do not welcome the prospect of being part of a socialist redistribution of wealth from one section of society to another which, in order to have some impact, must begin taking at a fairly low income level. I was delighted to hear the hon. Member for Birkenhead challenging those old ideas. His presence here is a tribute to him, although not necessarily to his party, which may have represented a greater threat to him than anyone else in his constituency at the general election, as we know only too well.

[Mr. Ian Taylor]

I welcome the Gracious Speech. It contains many points which we shall be able to debate in the several days to come and subsequently.

I wish to breach convention slightly by taking up a point made by the hon. Member for Truro about the citizens charter having no real teeth and receiving little emphasis in the Queen's Speech. That is far from the truth when one considers not only the Queen's Speech but the speech yesterday by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. I have some little link with the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster who is responsible for the citizens charter, so it is slightly in breach of convention for me to raise the issue in the House. Nevertheless, I shall do so, but only to set out the agenda.

The citizens charter and the principles behind it will now be at the heart of all Government decisions right across the board. It is an essential part of opening up public services and Government are making them more efficient and responsive. The new Department with a voice in Cabinet means that the citizens charter will not just have teeth but be of great importance. It is also critical to the concept of public expenditure. If I do not say too much about it it is because, as a Parliamentary Private Secretary, I am not free to do so.

The important statement in the Gracious Speech was that the Government intend to

"reduce the share of national income taken by the public sector and balance the budget over the medium term, reducing taxes when it is prudent to do so".

That is the right objective, which is probably shared, privately or openly, by several Opposition Members. It is important not to prejudge the speed or the nature of moving to objectives such as reducing taxation.

There is nothing wrong with reducing taxation. It is clearly not right to reduce taxation imprudently when the buoyancy of consumer demand which leads to company profitability is insufficient to increase the total revenue from tax. Therefore, given the current state of the economy, it is difficult to predict when it will be possible to reduce taxation. However, there is no doubt that we can assist the increase in buoyancy of company and private fortunes by reducing taxation if that is done at the right time. We should never get ourselves stuck on the problem of why it is that at the right time a reduction in the level of taxation can increase the revenues that the Government receive from taxation, as was shown in the 1980s. If the Opposition could grasp that point, they would understand why it is possible to have low levels of taxation and large increases in expenditure on our great public services.

Since 1979, we have had a good record in real terms of spending money on the great public services. There is no embarrassment about that for a Conservative. As a Conservative, I believe in the role of the public services. That does not mean that I believe that everything should be done by the Government, but there is no doubt, that where people in our community require assistance, that is quite properly acted upon by the Government, who should constantly seek to make sure that no one is left outside the net, in financial or other terms. That would create the kind of underclass to which the hon. Member for Birkenhead referred. Because an underclass increases instability in society, that cannot be part of a Conservative objective.

One of the greatest objectives of all Conservatives is to create a stable society. If that is not done, tensions will be created that lead to insurrections and changes in society at too dramatic a pace, which would be worrying to anyone of a Conservative mind. Over many decades, Conservatives have quite properly attempted to ensure that the inevitable divisions that occur in society—only a theorist believes that there can be no divisions—are not of a magnitude that could ever cause our society to become unstable.

As Conservatives, we do not necessarily believe that the closing down of such instabilities should be entirely a function of the Government. The role of the individual —or, to use today's colloquial term, the active citizen—is most important, in a partnership with the Government. A Government who encourage the individual's desire to bind others in their community to them, participate in voluntary work and have some say in the institutions that they value, such as health and education, are playing their part in encouraging those allegiances in society that are essential if social stability is to be maintained.

It is not the Government's job to do that alone, thus creating a dependency culture. It is their job to do sufficient to encourage others to participate in that process. That is relevant to the whole public sector, which should not be seen as a total umbrella or framework for everything that ought to be done. The public sector exists to enable individuals to contribute to what we as Conservatives consider to be socially desirable ends. Achieving that balance is a constant concern for all Governments. At some times there is more emphasis on state intervention and at others more emphasis on the Government withdrawing from that course.

The Government can achieve none of those socially desirable objectives unless there is a stable economy. We have encountered a difficult recession over the past two or three years, but it is of academic, although perhaps political, interest whether the Government were entirely responsible for starting it. Matters would have been much worse had we listened to the recommendations at the time of the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East, who argued for deeper interest rate cuts during the boom prior to the recession. He would have engineered a recession that was more vicious than that which we have suffered.

Our current situation is relatively stable. It was made clear at the G7 meeting only the other week that in comparative terms we have a stable base from which to recover in the 1990s and from which to compete against other nations. Our percentage debt as a total of gross domestic product is perhaps the lowest of them all, and that is a good position from which to embark on recovery.

It is of concern to anyone to have a public sector borrowing requirement of 4·5 per cent. of GDP, but at this stage in the recession, that is less than it might be—and is certainly less than that of certain other countries, which look upon us with some envy.

Since joining the exchange rate mechanism, we have enjoyed consistent interest rate cuts, despite the tensions that could otherwise have arisen. I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith) that, when trading patterns predict that it will be safe to do so, we should move into the narrow band of the ERM, because currency stability is an absolute prerequisite of growth and economic rectitude for our country.

Sterling has performed extremely well in recent months, which indicates not only domestic but international recognition of the fact that the return of a Conservative

Government and the continuation of our policies to damp down inflation and resolutely to maintain a proper balance in overall public expenditure create confidence. There can be no greater vote of confidence than the narrowing of the difference between the Lombard rate in Germany and this country's base rate to only one quarter of a point. That would have been unimaginable in the past. If someone had written that that would occur in 1992, he or she would have been written off as a lunatic or Sir Alan Walters.

There are, however, certain matters that the Government must address. There is no doubt that the public sector borrowing requirement is at a level higher than that with which we would feel comfortable. That has been admitted by the Government, and there is no point in trying to hide it. If we attempt to do so, we shall not be able to tackle that problem in the way that is necessary.

It is not necessarily relevant to worry whether the PSBR will grow next year to more than £30 billion, as the Red Book predicts; it is much more important to find ways of reducing it over a period. The great thing about balancing a budget over a cycle is that one passes quickly on without defining the word "cycle" or the length of the cycle. Nevertheless, that is an important objective, and one of which we ought never to lose sight.

I hope that the Government do not slip into the view that it will be sufficient to meet the Maastricht convergence terms. Although I believe that we ought to move towards the convergence set out in the Maastricht treaty—the Gracious Speech rightly gives priority to that—the objective of bringing the PSBR below 3 per cent. of GDP is not itself a sufficient target. We must obviously go much below that.

Whether a surplus can be achieved depends on many other variables, such as the rate of growth—which itself is dependent on the performance of other world economies, because our nation spends much of its time and effort on trading. It is, however, crucial to attack public sector borrowing, and there are two ways of doing that. We know that in the current phase, there is far from any truth in Labour's accusation that we bought votes and therefore increased the borrowing requirement. In net terms, we injected only about £1·8 billion through the Budget's tax changes and the move towards the 20 per cent. band, which Labour was foolish to oppose during the general election campaign.

Our real problem has been that, in a recession, the Government quite properly use the automatic stabilisers. I do not believe that the great debate that *The Guardian* tried to foist on the electorate during the campaign was relevant. I refer to the golden rule about balancing Government income and expenditure over any period, however calculated, and whether or not the figures exclude items of capital expenditure. I refer also to a recent leading article in the *Financial Times*, which, judging by its editorial on election day, is not necessarily a Conservative newspaper. According to the *Financial Times*, it is entirely proper for the Government to be borrowing at this stage in the cycle, bearing in mind the depth of the recession. I think that that is absolutely correct; it offends none of my Conservative economic principles.

Of course the automatic stabilisers to which I referred will create a burst of expenditure on unemployment benefit. The point is, however, that that expenditure will be more than compensated for as the economy picks up. There will be a lagging effect on both sides, but, once tax revenues have picked up as a result of the buoyancy of the economy—a buoyancy that I believe is already present, and independent evidence underlines my belief—they will rapidly begin to provide us with some scope.

Although I do not wish to predict or even to request further tax cuts at this stage, I nevertheless expect to see a dramatic difference over the next two or three years in the revenues that the Government receive from current taxation levels. That will begin to give us a degree of freedom. Any economist who predicts growth rates is either a fool or working for the Treasury, but it is true to say that the rate of growth that is generally forecast for the country could be well above the trend established in the 1980s. I am heartened by the G7 forecasts of growth in other countries. We may well find that an automatic correction takes place in the PSBR in regard to revenues, and that would benefit the Government.

The other side of the PSBR is expenditure. The Government have a remarkably good record of expenditure on the great public services. While not going back on any of our current plans, we should clearly restrain the rate of increase in that expenditure. My right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary—he is not in the Chamber now, but I congratulate him on his appointment—faces a difficult public expenditure round, but that is an essential part of ensuring that the economy as a whole is put in a position from which a strong recovery is possible. Many other matters will depend on that.

It is often forgotten, for example, that some of our great public services are undermined by inflation. Unless inflation is controlled, we shall eat away at the very public services that we wish to support. By bringing the overall economy under control and lowering inflation, we shall help to improve those public services. That it is possible to do that only and simply by spending money is one of the great myths of politics. We must attempt to restrain the rate of public expenditure growth.

That leads me to a major point. Clearly, all our citizens want better services—better education, better local government and a better health service. In their wisdom, however—a wisdom that they demonstrated by returning a Conservative Government despite the background difficulties—the British electorate know that better services cannot be achieved by means of money alone. Sensibly, the Gracious Speech referred to a continuation of the privatisation programme. This crucial factor must be taken into account: if a service does not need to be performed by Government, it is better for it not to be performed by Government.

Before that observation is dismissed as dogma, let me explain it. The Government run many services extremely badly, placing limitations on expenditure and capital investment that are totally contrary to the cycle needed by the industries concerned. Many people criticised us strongly for denationalising the water industry for instance. They seemed to think that water and water purity were God-given. Perhaps they were originally, but I would not want to rely on God alone for the treatment of sewage!

The fact is that, once the water industry was removed from Government control, the Government could fulfil their role of protecting the consumer by toughening the regulatory controls, because they were not simultaneously providing the service. It is impossible to be both regulator and provider. Now, there is a massive programme of investment in the water industry.

The hon. Member for Dagenham—who is trying to do all the Labour party's thinking, apart from that done by

[Mr. Ian Taylor]

the hon. Member for Birkenhead—said that Labour had its own solution: simply change the Treasury rules. But that is not possible, simply because if the Government are the guarantor in the last resort, even of a leasing programme, the public sector must stick to the Treasury's public expenditure budget. Total freedom from Government will be necessary. Then, access to the private markets will make it possible to improve services and raise the level of capital in the industries involved, without reducing the Government's responsibility to ensure that those services are delivered efficiently.

Another aspect of the public sector is the removal of waste. Contracting out is one method, and I hope that it will be adopted across the board in the public services. The Government, as the purchaser and the regulator of quality, need not be the provider at the same time; as I have said, the same applies to all the former nationalised industries and public services.

Those are the ways forward, and they represent a much clearer view of the Government's attitude to the way in which society should be run. We do believe in state activity; we do believe in embracing the concept of the welfare state. Any Conservative Government will require social provision. The critical difference between the parties lies in the fact that our interest is in the end user rather than in the provider. The provider could be the Government, or it could be any private contractor wishing to offer its services. There is now fresh thinking about the way in which the Government can run the railways, coal, water and social security—the "next steps" agencies are an example. Ultimately, the pressure on public expenditure may be lifted, allowing access to private capital and resources.

I believe that those are the great strands of thinking on which the Queen's Speech was based. They are the way forward, and I am confident that the economy, as its base becomes increasingly strong, will be able to deliver better public services without necessarily resorting solely to dramatically increased public expenditure. I commend the Government's programme, and I welcome the Queen's Speech. I think that we are on the right track for a very successful few years.

5.7 pm

Mrs. Bridget Prentice (Lewisham, East): I am grateful for this opportunity to explain why the measures set out in yesterday's Queen's Speech will not benefit people in east Lewisham. First, however, let me say one or two words about my predecessors.

Colin Moynihan had held Lewisham, East since 1983. For much of that time, he was a junior Minister. I sometimes wonder whether the fact that the press often dubbed him a very energetic person might have been the reason for his being moved from sport to energy. I acknowledge his work in the constituency, and I am sure that the House will join me in wishing him and his wife —he recently married—all the best for the future.

Let me also mention Roland Moyle. He too was a Minister but served in a Labour Government. I want to put on record my thanks for his tireless work in the campaign for my election. I was honoured to receive his support, as I was to receive that of the people of east Lewisham.

Mine is one of the three constituencies in the London borough of Lewisham. All three are now represented by Labour Members, supported by an important and efficient Labour council. From Blackheath to Grove Park and the Downham estate, the area is overwhelmingly residential, with little manufacturing industry: the main employers are local government and the health service.

Therefore, most people have to commute to work using the dilapidated, rundown and often unreliable Network SouthEast or have to sit in the congestion and pollution of London traffic. Great hopes lay with the extension of the docklands light railway, but now even that is bathed in uncertainty.

The people of east Lewisham have a community spirit. They want better quality services, not just for themselves but for their neighbours and those less fortunate than themselves. That is why they voted Labour. There is a history of rebellion against Government injustice. That is shown by the first rejection of the poll poll tax by Wat Tyler and John Ball on Blackheath. We also have our modern heroes: the community spirit was particularly apparent to the nation in the welcome given to Terry Waite.

In the last election, the people of east Lewisham expressed their dissent with Government policies in a more conventional way than that of 1381. One of the many reasons for that dissent, apart from the transport policies, was the level of unemployment and the poor prospect of training, particularly for young people. It is that upon which I wish to concentrate.

Unemployment in east Lewisham rose last year by a staggering 87 per cent. Long-term unemployment rose particularly steeply. Tragically for our young people, in whom I have a special interest as a careers teacher, there were 247 people chasing every job vacancy. It was the unemployment black spot of London. Only last month, on the Government's own figures, there were only 34 vacancies in the jobcentre and 17 in the local careers office. What hopes does that give to young people ready to play their part in the local community? What hope do the Government give to the three out of four young people in east Lewisham who have participated in Government training schemes and find, three months after completing them, that they are no closer to having a job? There was nothing in yesterday's Queen's Speech that touched their lives.

Why will not the Government consider that quality training with a guaranteed job will build us a work force that can compete with anything that our competitors can do? Why do they not see that giving people the skills to work removes the alienation and brings positive results that benefit not just the individual but society and the economy as a whole?

I want to speak briefly about a project in east Lewisham that is in desperate need of help. The local Rathbone Society has been training and supporting 50 local people with special educational needs. It has had the total backing of the provider agencies such as the Spastics Society and has trained people to work in retailing and care so that organisations such as the local council and Tesco have returned to it again and again to take on more of its trainees. It was funded through the training and enterprising council, although the money was paid directly to the national society.

On Friday 10 April this year—I make no comment about the significance of that date—it was closed down.

Now, the 30 people who currently need the particular support given by their dedicated trainers are left with no idea of whether their training will be completed or whether there will be jobs for them to go to. Yesterday the Prime Minister said that he wanted to create a country in which everyone may realise their aspirations to rise as far and as fast as they can

"if they have the will and the skills to do so"—*[Official Report]*, 6 May 1992; Vol 207, c. 73]

Those young people have the will and their trainers have given them the skills. The real test of the Prime Minister's fine words will be whether the Government will give them the opportunity.

5.14 pm

Mr. David Porter (Waveney): I would not wish to be the only Member not to congratulate you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on your new post, and I do so most wholeheartedly.

I am glad to have heard the remarks of the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field), who spoke so earnestly and from his heart. His remarks may have surprised some people, but not me. I have learnt to respect him for his work in chairing the Select Committee on Social Security during the last Parliament. I still favour the targeting of benefits, but I accept his point and I hope that we can open a broad debate on that issue in the House on another day. Like the hon. Member for Birkenhead, I also wish to refer to Maxwell.

On behalf of Conservative Members, I thank the hon. Member for Lewisham, East (Mrs. Prentice) for the tribute she paid to Colin Moynihan. Now that she is here, I wish her well on behalf of all her constituents. I still remember my maiden speech nearly five years ago. I felt that I had got off to a fairly good start, but about halfway through it suddenly hit me that I was talking in the House of Commons and then it was not so good. At least I did not have the misfortune of someone in the House of Lords who is reputed to have dreamt that he was speaking in the House of Lords and then woke up to find that he was.

Mention has been made of the historic nature of this fourth term of Conservative Government—1826 and all that. That is very interesting for historians, statisticians and psephologists, but for me the more interesting feature is the challenge and opportunity that the fourth term presents. It is a challenge and opportunity for those of us who came here in 1987 because we already feel that in this Parliament there is a new sense of listening and learning and a determination to get it right. I hope that that will be reflected in the Bill to enforce the Maastricht treaty.

There is also challenge and opportunity in my constituency of Waveney, which is the forgotten slice of north Suffolk. It is the most easterly point of the British Isles and 120 miles from London. On a bad day, on the road or on a train, it might as well be 10 times that. Only when British Rail is no longer in the queue at the public trough, together with schools, hospitals and pensions, will it receive the investment that it needs. Therefore, I am pleased about the prospects for railways held out in the Queen's Speech.

For tourists, who are vital to our local economy, the relative isolation is part of the area's charm. However, those who live in such a rapidly growing area and work offshore or in fishing, farming, food processing, construction or the professions, know that it is an area where, even in the late 1980s, we still had higher than the average unemployment in East Anglia. A programme built on steady growth, low inflation and, as the Prime Minister said yesterday, creating the wealth to spend on welfare is welcome, and I believe that such a programme will deliver its promises.

Whenever a recovery occurs, there is always a delay between improving demand and employers feeling able to take on more staff. In the eastern part of East Anglia that economic fact has to be added to the reality of a changing economic base in Lowestoft and in the large rural hinterland. It has been suggested by some pundits that the English countryside is already rather urban. That is because the social outlook and values of local residents are no longer so different from those of townspeople and because basic services such as water, power and telecommunications are generally universally available. That may be so in some senses, but in East Anglia we naturally and properly have a view that we are different from elsewhere and, within East Anglia itself, differences happily abound.

In public spending, the provision of public services, all Government policies, the policies of the Rural Development Commission, the training and enterprise councils, the enterprise agencies and the local authorities there needs to be a rural dimension. I hope that we can deal with that issue in another debate. I felt it right to set down a marker since East Anglia is not only the bread basket of Britain but the engine for growth and the hub of the wheel of northern Europe.

We need to address the small business sector which, just as in the 1980s, is still the great hope for economic growth. Perhaps the Government would look at their definition of a small business. Businesses with one or two people are small as are businesses with 15 or 50 employees. However, they are all lumped together in Government statistics, and that is not always helpful.

In new businesses in East Anglia—according to VAT registration—there was a net gain of 18,000, or 34 per cent., between 1980 and 1990. Research at the Warwick business school suggests that about 40 per cent. of all new firms will have a short lifespan and that about 56 per cent. of firms will remain small but will exist for many years. That leaves just 4 per cent. of new firms that will be the key to long-term job creation.

The Government policy of the right balanced economic climate and regulations has to suit 100 per cent. of new firms—not to mention all the firms that already exist. That will be the challenge for this Parliament. It is especially vital for Waveney and other parts of Suffolk and Norfolk that the Government get the climate for growth right and make sure that the balance of regulations is fair.

The broad title for today's debate is "Public expenditure". As has already been hinted, on both sides of the House our first instinctive tendency is to measure the success of a project, idea or programme by how much is spent on it, as my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary said at the beginning of the debate. Money is the criterion. "How much?" demand Opposition Members as soon as a statement on a new scheme is made. "Too much," may be the response of at least some of my hon. Friends. The amount of public expenditure seems to be the macho benchmark these days.

We all know that that money has to be earned before it can be spent, and the package in the Queen's Speech about firm financial policies, balancing the budget, reducing taxes when prudent, supplying market mechanisms and

[Mr. David Porter]

incentives, and improving the working of the economy is not only welcome—it is plain common sense. Without that package, the promises about the aid programme to developing countries, and about improvements to public services, the health service, community care, pensions, schools and our environment, would all count for nothing.

One sentence in the Queen's Speech reads:

"My Government will continue to improve and modernise the social security system with sustained emphasis on those groups with the greatest need."

As economic recovery gathers pace, and as steady growth means that there is more room for flexibility in public expenditure, let us do more than keep faith with pensioners, which has long been our manifesto pledge. Yes, let us focus on targeting help on the elderly with low incomes, and let us direct efforts to the very elderly and the elderly sick and disabled. Yes, let us not lose sight of the needs of those in nursing and residential care or facing that prospect. But let us not neglect that group of people, now retired, who belong to the age group who gave the best years of their lives, their young adulthood, to the war effort, and who, through no fault of their own, could not take advantage of an occupational pension scheme. Because of their own efforts, many of those people are just above the benefit line, and, having worked hard and served selflessly, they now feel betrayed. I urge the Government to keep targeting, and to keep honing the arrows of spending that they aim, so that that group can be helped specifically, as appropriate.

The Maxwell saga has already been mentioned. I urge the Government to make an early statement in response to the report of the Select Committee on Social Security on the plight of all the pensioners robbed by Maxwell. That means the existing and future pensioners of all Maxwell companies, including British International Helicopters, which is now in administration in my constituency. Why cannot the good offices of Government be used urgently to co-ordinate the information and the rescue efforts so that no Maxwell victim suffers further anguish? Many Maxwell pensioners are now in such an urgent plight that it presents a danger to the whole pension-owning democracy, and cries out for urgent action. Will the new Select Committee have to draft a new pensions Bill, or will the Government do it—and do it quickly?

There are other omissions from the Queen's Speech. I know that the speech cannot contain everything, and that the catch-all phrase

"Other measures will be laid before you."

may cover those omissions, but what about training? The education Bill and the employment Bill will not deal with training. Is it not time at least for a White Paper on training needs, leading to a form of statutory deal for the physically handicapped, the blind, the deaf and others, such as the mentally handicapped and—as a separate group—the mentally ill? Those people represent a huge and talented seam of national assets, which is not always allowed to realise its full and rewarding potential.

What about Sunday trading? We expect the European Court, by the end of this year, to settle how British law should be shaped or scrapped as we seem no longer able to determine that for ourselves. Surely we can this Session reform the Shops Act 1950 in line with the proposals of REST—Recreation, Entertainment, Social and Family Travel.

Why is there no pledge to update the sea defence laws? Another winter will come and go and the present ad hoc arrangements, with no coherent coastal protection or river flooding strategy, will stay in place. We who live in coastal areas will have to cross our fingers yet again. Will the Government respond urgently to the report of the Select Committee on the Environment on coastal zone planning?

Most people are disappointed at the delays in setting up the environment agency. I hope that that still remains a firm commitment. I trust that the appropriate Bill will be in the next Queen's Speech. I suppose that it makes sense to wait long enough to take account of the decisions made at next month's earth summit, so perhaps that is the reason for the delay.

If the pundits are right in saying that home ownership is reaching a ceiling, should we not be doing more than the Queen's Speech suggests to broaden the renting of homes?

I hope that I have offered my criticisms in a constructive manner. I am happy to welcome the thrust of the Queen's Speech and to play my part in implementing it, and in helping us to meet the challenges and opportunities as a group and as a Parliament. I welcome the chance that it gives me to continue to put and keep Waveney on the map, before either the Boundary Commission or the North sea sweeps it away.

5.25 pm

Ms. Hilary Armstrong (Durham, North-West): Thank you for calling me, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It is a great pleasure to see you in the Chair. I am not sure what it says about the office of Speaker and the role of the Deputy Speakers that both our Speaker and one of our Deputy Speakers now come from Yorkshire. Perhaps it means that this seat of government is beginning to recognise that north of Watford there is not only life, but sense, too—and common sense. The future talent of this Chamber should be drawn much more from the North.

The debate on the Queen's Speech is one occasion on which we are allowed to be more parochial than usual. My commitment to the North and my parochialism will emerge later in my speech.

I was interested to hear the speech of the hon. Member for Waveney (Mr. Porter). He was the first Conservative in the debate on the Queen's Speech that I have heard acknowledge that there are issues which the Government have to think about, which emerged clearly during the election campaign, and that there are problems that the Government have not tackled, which were not broached in the Queen's Speech.

Many of us were disappointed by the Queen's Speech because it was so lacklustre, and did not take the situation of the country as it is and try to work with it. I do not quite share the forward thinking that my hon. Friend the Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) betrayed today, but it is important that hon. Members on both sides of the House begin to recognise more fully and honestly the position of many people in this country, and our responsibility to tackle it. Neither side should be complacent about where we are now. The Government must be cautious about triumphalism based on the results of the election. There are many lessons for all of us to think about.

The nation is very far from being at ease with itself. Some of us come from even further north than Yorkshire. In fact, some of us look upon Yorkshire people as really

midlanders. In the north, the Labour party has its highest vote for many years. Yet again, the Labour vote in the northern region, as in every English region, increased. Our vote in the north is now more than 50 per cent.

Any Government who are honest in saying that they want a nation at ease with itself must not neglect the aspirations and wishes of people who voted in that way. It is important to consider the make-up of the north. My area and the constituencies around it are now represented exclusively by Labour Members. The changes in that area have been overwhelming. There has been a shift. The traditional industries, such as mining, steel and shipbuilding, have gone. There are virtually no jobs in those areas now. Yet the people are voting Labour in greater numbers than at any time under this Government.

The people did not say that they wanted to get rid of public expenditure altogether. The Government need to take account of the lessons about the use of public expenditure learned in recent years in the northern region. The Prime Minister paid his first visit to the north during the election campaign, but unfortunately he missed the essence of what we have been trying to do in the north.

We accept the world as it is, and we have tried to use public expenditure to fuel and encourage private sector expenditure so that we work together to ensure a future and opportunity for people living in the region. That is why Nissan is in the region. Local authorities and trade unions work hard with central Government and with the private sector to give that opportunity.

That is why we have the Northern Development Company. It is not a central Government initiative; it is an initiative born of the aspirations of trade unionists, of local authorities and of the private sector. They wanted a development agency that recognised the changing nature of the north and the fact that there needed to be that partnership and a determination to overcome. Once those organisations in the north had got themselves together and worked out where they were going, we asked the Government for support. Last year, the agency was given the European prize as the best development agency.

We have tried to use diminishing public expenditure to draw in the private sector and thus to get the best from both. It is still true that the private sector is very wary of investing in the north, because it knows that it still takes enormous risks and because the recession has meant that, in recent years, more economic development has begun to be difficult.

Unemployment has again started to rise drastically. When unemployment rises in the north, it does not do so from a zero per cent. or 2 per cent. base; it rises from a high base. In areas such as Consett, we are approaching 20 per cent. male unemployment. Despite all the amazing things that have been done in that town, there is again significant male unemployment. We know that we need a partnership approach to be able to unlock that problem.

In this debate on public expenditure, I plead with the Government to change their ideological view which, unfortunately, we could detect in the Queen's Speech yesterday and in the Chief Secretary's speech today "Public expenditure bad, private enterprise good." Our experience in the north is that we need a partnership, that we need not to be ideological about either side, but to use expenditure from the public and private sectors as effectively as possible.

I turn to child care, in which the Government, because they have turned their backs on public expenditure, have missed opportunities, which means that private enterprise is not growing as it should. In recent years, I have talked to employer after employer. They say, "Yes, we recognise that child care is important and that we should open up opportunities for our employees—especially women, but also some of our male employees." Employers want to introduce child care, but they say, "We are not child care experts and we do not want to find that we have to do it ourselves, because we know that it needs a skilled and careful application."

Employers were pleased by the Labour party's proposal for partnership development. We said that we would use public sector funds to draw in employers' funds and to raise money from employees who could afford to contribute. By using public funds most effectively, the Government would then be able to ensure that women were able to maintain their career paths and so continue to pay taxes. An independent report which came out just before the election demonstrated that, if that approach was taken, child care would be paid for within 10 years by the increased contribution in individual taxes of people who were involved.

As a result of the dogmatic approach that things must be achieved by the free market, we have lost the opportunity to open up the individual choices that some families wish to make about their pattern of family life which would enable their children to have access to quality child care. The Government's dogmatic approach has moved them away from opening up those opportunities.

There is another area in which the Government, because of dogma, are reducing choice rather than opening it up. I often wonder whether the Government have the same understanding of the word "choice" as I do. The Queen's Speech contained a commitment to a Bill

"to extend choice and diversity in education."

I think that the Government mean that more children will have access to the private sector of education and that there will be more opting out of the state sector. That will not bring choice to the majority; it will reduce choice for the majority. It will give choice to the providers.

Other hon. Members have said that the Government are not interested in providers. In education, it is precisely what they are interested in. They want to emasculate local democratic decisions about the future schooling of children. By doing that, they will introduce not diversity, but division. That division will condemn groups of our young children and our adults to less opportunity and less choice in getting a quality education service. More than anything else, it will deny choice to communities and to the nation. It will reduce the overall quality of education.

If we are to lift groups out of poverty and to enable the poorest in our society to progress, they must be involved in education in a way that none of us has recognised in the past. Those people have to see education as a central part of their families, of their communities and of their individual lives. Only when the Government are prepared to draw away the veils of dogma will they begin to take hold of what real equality of opportunity for our youngest children and for our young adults will mean.

The people in my constituency who at present have to go to the neighbourhood school cannot afford to go to another school. Unless we ensure that the neighbourhood school, the village school and the small town school have no choice but to offer the very best opportunities in education, we shall offer those people not only no choice, but no future.

[Ms. Hilary Armstrong]

I urge the Government to recognise some of the lessons from the election that we are having to recognise. The Government must think their way through what we are getting in terms of a divided society and of a group of people who feel that they have no hope and no future in this society. The Government must recognise that, and they must work to ensure that they think about those people's futures. They must work with us to unlock opportunity for those who at the moment have no hope, very little aspiration and very little belief that the Government care about them at all.

5.39 pm

Mrs. Barbara Roche (Hornsey and Wood Green): Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for calling me. May I congratulate you on your appointment?

I am extremely honoured to represent the constituency of Hornsey and Wood Green. It is one of the largest constituencies in population terms in London, and it is a collection of north London villages. It is an extremely beautiful constituency, with a great deal of open space, but it also has many inner-city areas and many residential areas.

I pay tribute to my predecessor, Sir Hugh Rossi, who held the seat of Hornsey and Wood Green for more than 26 years. He was widely recognised as an excellent constituency Member. It is the convention that, in one's maiden speech, one pays tribute to one's predecessor of whatever political complexion. In my case, it is no formal tribute. I have great admiration for the work of Hugh Rossi. He was an excellent Member of Parliament, and I look forward to following in his footsteps. He was well known in the House for his work as Chairman of the Environment Select Committee, and environmental matters are extremely important in the constituency.

Joyce Butler was the Member of Parliament for the Wood Green part of Hornsey and Wood Green, again for a long period—more than 24 years. Sadly, she died at the end of last year. She had a reputation second to none for making green issues a priority long before they became fashionable not only in the House but elsewhere.

My constituents feel passsionately about the preservation of their open space. There was a campaign to save Parkland walk from proposals to put a motorway through it. Local groups are working vigorously along the Archway road, to make sure that local homes are restored after more than 20 years of environmental blight. In my constituency we are also tackling the pilot scheme for red routes—a scheme which has led to business failure in a constituency in which nearly 8,000 people are out of work. The scheme has added to local unemployment and to the deterioration of the area.

I share the feeling of many people in my constituency who want Alexandra park to be preserved as an open resource not only for us in north London but for everybody in London who wishes to use and admire that lovely park. I also shared the sadness of many people in my constituency that the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) as Secretary of State for the Environment did not list Alexandra palace, which is not only a symbol of Hornsey and Wood Green but the place where broadcasting began in this country.

Hornsey and Wood Green is an area of many active community groups. Another of my predecessors was Lady Gammans. It was said of Lady Gammans that she could not hear the tinkle of teacups in Hornsey without being present. I hope to follow her example.

When I talk about Hornsey and Wood Green, it would be wrong not to mention the richness of the constituency and its benefit from the variety of community groups. We are very privileged to have a very big Cypriot community. That community, although it is integrated into the country, and of course its hopes and aspirations for its children are centred on many of the issues that are discussed in the House, is also concerned with what is happening in the beautiful country of Cyprus—a country that is still cruelly divided, and a country which looks at barriers coming down in the rest of the world and in Europe, but which sadly still remains divided. I hope during my career in the House to add to efforts to bring about a just solution to the problems of that beautiful place and to the uniting of that country.

I was extremely interested to read in the *House Magazine* that, as a new Member, I am one of about 9 per cent. who are members of the Bar. I shall not dwell at length on the many virtues of members of the Bar, because some hon. Members would wish me to do so. Suffice it to say that when I have been welcomed to the House by my colleagues, I have noticed a tendency to count their fingers after the warm handshaking.

I noted that the Queen's Speech emphasises crime and law and order. That is a subject in which I am naturally extremely interested. My constituency in the past has seen a 16 per cent. increase in crime over the past year. Many of those crimes are street robberies and burglaries which go to the heart of living in our great city—crimes which make it difficult for people to go out at night, attacks on women and vulnerable people, and attacks on our black and ethnic minority communities.

Our local council and the police have had a good relationship in combating crime. There have been joint sessions between local councils, the police and myself on the issue. However, the issue goes beyond the police and the local authority. It needs proper support from central Government and resources. Yes, we need more police officers on the beat. Yes, we need better community policing. If we are to have the new initiatives that the Metropolitan police plan to introduce, we need state funding, support and extra resources.

We also need a legal system that is prepared to bring about that change. We need to make sure that the royal commission brings forward proposals to restore the emphasis on measures to make sure that our judiciary and legal profession truly represent the people of this country and that they reflect our modern society. I hope that the Lord Chief Justice can follow the excellent example of Madam Speaker and dispense with the wearing of wigs. I know to my cost that wigs are extremely uncomfortable and hot, particularly in the summer months.

I hope to be able to make a contribution to matters which are of interest to my constituents and to the wider community. It is only by getting the legal system right that we can truly make sure that we have the democratic society that the country needs and that I hope to be able to help to achieve on behalf of my constituents in Hornsey and Wood Green.

5.48 pm

Mr. Malcolm Chisholm (Edinburgh, Leith): Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for calling me at such an early stage.

There are many things that I could say about Ron Brown, my predecessor, but I shall confine myself to saying that he knew the importance of class politics, when deceiving or joking voices prattle on about a classless society. He was, of course, officially the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Leith, a conjunction of places that might cause some horror among the present residents of Leith, and certainly would have done in years gone by.

Seventy-two years ago, Leith was a completely different town from Edinburgh. At that time, a Bill was introduced to make the two boroughs into one. The opposition to that Bill was led by the father of the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn), the then Liberal Member of Parliament for Leith, Captain William Benn. He made many wise remarks in a remarkable speech in the House on 8 June 1920—none of them so wise, however, as his decision five years later to resign his seat and join the Labour party, something which I would recommend to right hon. and hon. Members in the present Liberal party if they were here.

Two remarks in that speech connect particularly with current problems. Captain Benn pointed out in 1920 that the whole breath and life of Leith was industrial. He also said that it should not be assumed that, because two places were contiguous, the interests of the smaller community would be best served by joining both under one administration. The latter remark about Leith then reminds me of Scotland now. It is crying out for more control over its own affairs. Of course, the Conservative party used to fulminate against centralising socialism but now presides over the most centralised state in Europe. We on this side of the House are the decentralisers. We are the democrats. It is because we are decentralisers and democrats that we demand a multi-option referendum now on the constitutional future of Scotland.

To say that the whole breath and life of Leith is industrial was true in 1920, true in 1979, but hardly true today. In the past 13 years, manufacturing employment in Scotland has fallen by 37 per cent. and by an even higher percentage within Leith. The result of that in my constituency today is the appalling percentage of unemployed people: 20 per cent. of the economically active population in Leith. That is the highest percentage in Scotland and it is the official figure, without the many fiddles of the past 13 years.

Just as there was nothing in the Queen's Speech about bringing democracy to Scotland, so there was nothing about bringing jobs to Leith. That stark, horrifying reality of unemployment is the background to everything that I support or oppose in the House. In particular, I will support only economic policies which make massive inroads into those unemployment figures and the human misery that lies behind them.

Today's debate is about public expenditure, and I want to talk about three areas of public expenditure which I know are important to thousands of people in Leith—housing, health and child care. In the four weeks that I have been a Member of Parliament, I have been inundated at surgeries and on the telephone with requests about housing. People are desperate for homes, yet public expenditure by the Scottish Office on housing has been cut more than any other area of expenditure since 1979. I am angry, but hardly surprised, that there was nothing in the Queen's Speech about building more homes. That would make it just too relevant to the problems of ordinary people.

On health, the people of Leith have been deprived of various services in the past few years at their two main local hospitals—Leith hospital and the Western General hospital. Now they face the certainty of opt-outs. With the 1993 Scottish opt-outs stitched up before the election and many more pencilled in for 1994, that means a health service based on need, but unfortunately, it is the need to generate income rather than the needs of patients.

The people of Leith care passionately about the health service. I can assure the Government that they will fight for the return of services such as the accident and emergency department at the Western General and for the retention of their hospitals under full NHS control.

Public expenditure on housing and health are areas of public expenditure which have traditionally suffered during the past 13 years. Child care is a relatively new area, but hundreds of people in Leith—mainly women—are telling me that it must now be given proper recognition. It has been my privilege in the past year to be a member of the Greater Pilton child care action group, which is drawing up plans for a child care centre within Leith constituency, as well as raising the issue in a more general way.

Child care is at the heart of the political agenda in Leith. First, it is necessary for the relief of poverty. Unemployment is the biggest single cause of poverty. Hundreds of people—mainly women—cannot work because there is no free or affordable child care. Secondly, without child care, equal opportunities are meaningless. Child care is essential for sexual equality. Class politics, or any other kind of politics, is no good unless it practises and promotes sexual equality.

Thirdly, child care is necessary for the revival of the economy in a high-wage, high-tech direction—the only direction worth going in. It would pay for itself in a short time. That fundamental point has been the subject of at least two recent books and requires a speech to itself on another occasion.

I was told last week that there would be something about child care in the Queen's Speech. Once again, I was disappointed, but not surprised. The prospects for child care under the Conservative Government cannot be good, because the Government have shown so little concern in the past 13 years for the relief of poverty, the pursuit of sexual equality or the modernisation of the economy. However, I remind the Government of the recent European Commission recommendation on child care which talked of publicly funded child care for people in employment or training. I shall remind the Government of it again in the weeks ahead.

Leith wants jobs and homes. It wants child care and health care based on need. It wants democracy to help it to achieve that. It has never wanted Tory Members of Parliament or Tory priorities. Leith's motto is "Persevere". I should like to end with thanks to the people of Leith for sending me here, and a pledge to persevere until their priorities have won the day.

5.57 pm

Mr. David Ashby (Leicestershire, North-West): I am privileged to follow two very interesting maiden speeches.

I listened with great interest to the speech of the hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Mrs. Roche). She made a most eloquent reference to her predecessor, Sir Hugh Rossi, whom we all remember as a most distinguished Member of this House who had a great love of, and a great interest in, the environment and who cared greatly for the environment, as we know from his chairmanship of the Select Committee. I came into greatest contact with him in his role as chairman of the British-Italian all-party committee. I hope that the hon. Lady will join that committee and will continue that interest in the British-Italian group. It is one of the most thriving groups. It has always taken a great interest in that country and done its utmost to renew friendships and keep friendships going.

I was interested to hear that the hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green shares my professional background. It seems that Hornsey and Wood Green likes lawyers. Sir Hugh was a lawyer. If she continues as she began today, she will make a great mark on the House. She made a most eloquent speech, and I congratulate her most heartily on it.

The hon. Member for Edinburgh, Leith (Mr. Chisholm) made a rather more controversial speech——

Mr. Frank Field: He has just taken his speech out of the Chamber.

Mr. Ashby: In that case, I shall leave my remarks on his speech until he returns.

I wish to raise five matters. Two of them deal directly with the economy and businesses, and with Bills to be presented to the House. The Leasehold Reform Bill will not affect businesses, but it should. It will deal only with private property, the long leases of which are coming to an end and where people have an interest in that property. However, a much bigger and, in terms of the economy, more important problem should be dealt with—business property.

In the past 30 or 40 years most local authorities—county councils and district councils—have done a great deal to bring businesses into their areas by creating business parks and pump-priming their areas. They have had the necessary roads laid, helped with the planning and assembly, and sold off plots of land, invariably on long leases which may vary in length from 30 or 40 years to 90 years in exceptional cases. Most such leases last for 30 to 50 years. In north-west Leicestershire we have several such business parks.

As a result, the biggest owners of business premises in this country are local authorities. They own vast acreages and billions of pounds worth of property, and their ownership is continuously increasing. Local authorities will soon have an excessive grip on business. Indeed, we may have already reached that stage. We are grateful for what local authorities have done, and I have no quarrel with them; it has been magnificent for the economy, especially for local economies and businesses. But if one considers the overall economic state of the country, that ownership makes no sense. It is simply not good for the country that so much of its wealth is nationalised—and whether it is in local or Government hands, it is a form of nationalisation. Factories, shops and business premises throughout the country are effectively nationalised. Their control is nationalised not in a long-term but rather in a short-term sense.

Businesses that started 30 years ago have built themselves up and flourished. They have invested in factories and other buildings to benefit the economy and are now reaching the end of their leasehold interests. Their buildings are a wasted asset. What happens when the leases run out? Will the benevolent local authority say that, as the business is benefiting the local area, it will increase the length of the lease so that the business can continue? I wish that that were so, but invariably it is not.

When it comes to renewing leases, local authorities will drive the hardest bargain of all. They are Shylocks and very strong in the business sense. They have control because they hold the majority of the business land in the area. They have a stranglehold on business and will double or treble ground rents. That is not good news for businesses, especially when they are suffering from the effects of the recession.

If that were the only story, my complaint would not be so important, but the problem is even greater because local authorities are now demanding a piece of the action—a percentage of the profits as part of the extension of the lease. That is extremely bad news and simply not the way for local authorities to behave.

Local authorities should not own property. They can own their council offices and remain in one or two traditional areas, but they should not be in the property business, owning vast business parks. They should develop business parks, help the infrastructure and see that the properties are rented out at the beginning. Thereafter, they should sell the business parks, either offering them first to businesses within the business park or selling them to a pension fund. The money could then be recycled and invested in other land, and the local authorities could go back to pump-priming further expansion within the area.

I have not heard this serious problem raised in the House before. The problem will grow if it is not tackled firmly. The position of businesses in leasehold property differs little from that of people who own long, declining leases on their homes. When we tackle the leasehold ownership of housing, we should also consider the leasehold ownership of factories, factory sites and land.

The reform of local government will no doubt form part of other Bills to be laid before Parliament. Consultation is now taking place, but I believe firmly that this will be our last opportunity to reform local government, and we must get it right this time. I shall no doubt have an opportunity to make a speech when the relevant Bill is introduced, but we must now reflect on the form that it will take.

Our problem with local government has always been that the structures are too rigid. We have county councils, district councils and parish councils. We put the present form of local government into operation in 1974, but we found that it did not work and had to get rid of the metropolitan structures such as the Greater London council. As a former member of the GLC, I could see then that it did not work and I was wholly in favour of its abolition. If we are not careful, we shall put a similar rigid structure in its place which will not work either. The beauty of local government as it evolved, and before we started to interfere too much with it, was that it found its

own way forward without too much central interference. If we are to have successful reform, we shall have to return to that.

The right structure for local government is to be found in the district authorities, which should be allowed to find their own structure for various services. They should be free to make contracts with other districts—for example, to form an education committee. The same district council should have the opportunity to work with a quite different one, which might specialise in welfare services. That would give them flexibility and freedom. If, at the end of five years, a district council is dissatisfied with working with another authority on welfare service issues, it should be able to break the contract and form a new one with another authority. Such flexibility is essential if we are to reform local government, and achieving that flexibility requires keeping to the smallest units.

Also absent from the Queen's Speech was a reference to the reform of shopping hours. I know that we are awaiting a decision on that from Europe, but reform is urgently needed. The law has been flouted, which is not good.

Action from the centre is urgently needed to allow us the freedom to shop on a Sunday; we must not give in to those with narrow minds. At the same time, an element of choice must be given to shop workers so that they have the right to say, "No, I will not work on a Sunday." Shop workers should have the full protection of the law, and polls have reflected that opinion.

I think that the most recent polls, have shown that about 68 per cent. of those questioned were in favour of fewer restrictions on Sunday trading, and 93 per cent. believe that shop workers should enjoy the legal right to say no to Sunday working without suffering as a consequence. That is the form of change that is needed for Sunday trading. It is urgently required in this Session.

We cannot wait long for that legislation, as the law is looking like an ass. There is enormous pressure on local authorities, which have to prosecute when there has been a contravention of the law, but the contraventions are so numerous that the authorities' departments and the courts are unable to cope. Larger businesses are flouting the law quite openly, which is not good for this country. We must put the law right, and we must do so in this Parliament. Some recent cases have brought into disrepute the way in which our laws are policed and presented in court. There is much concern about that, and a loss of confidence in our legal system. We must address the issue in this Parliament forcefully, strongly and urgently.

The cases in which the Court of Appeal has allowed an appeal fall into two categories. The first includes those cases in which mistakes—I use that word advisedly—have been made at the policing stage, and there have also been failures and corruption in policing. Secondly, mistakes have been made on appeal and even in the courts. We must consider all those issues.

The Government have faced up to many of the problems relating to police evidence and the way in which it is presented in court. They have taken a number of important steps to ensure that any apparent gaps are closed. That has been done by the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 and by the amendments to that Act in subsequent criminal justice legislation. All such measures have been welcomed by those who practise law—by those who work at the Bar, solicitors and the judiciary generally.

However, despite those provisions, there are examples of the police, believing that someone is guilty, tailoring the evidence to fit that belief or taking insufficient care when investigating the case to make certain that there is not perhaps another side to the story and those involved are not guilty after all. In such incidents, the police do not investigate the case fully to discover where the truth lies. That is a matter of grave concern and has been, and will continue to be, a cause of miscarriages of justice. But action can be taken to improve the position.

No single action could do more to stop such problems than a fundamental reform of the police force. The police are crying out for a national police force. The idea of a police force based on counties is antiquated and absurd. It denies the opportunity for forensic specialties, and denies the various police officers the ability to move between the forces and gain promotion. In addition, it means that the police are stuck within a small locality and police force for a long time, which is not good.

The fact that such practices are not healthy was shown by what happened in the various crime squads set up in the 1970s. We witnessed the effect that different crime squads had on each other when they were working together for a number of years. Malpractices and inefficiencies were not challenged.

The police force should be utterly reformed and a national police force created. All the detailed examinations of every aspect of policing that have been carried out by the Select Committee on Home Affairs and other committees have always concluded that there should be a national police force. We must get away from our prejudices and our fears about a police state. We must consider the many advantages of a national police force, and the fact that it would resolve many of the problems that we are now encountering.

Mr. Peter Viggers (Gosport): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Ashby: I shall develop my next point and then give way.

It is not good enough simply to have a national police force; we need something else. The police force is a vast body of men and women; the problem is how to manage such a body without management expertise. Companies of all sizes have managers and directors—directors of finance, managing directors, personnel directors: in short, a managerial class. Without them, industry would fail. Everyone ascribes the success of industry first to its work force and secondly to its management. Other bodies of men also include a management class—the Army, the Navy and the Air Force all have such a class—yet the police force has no management class. It is managed, in army terms, by sergeant majors, half of whom have not even been on a command course.

I have inquired into what other police forces do. The best of them all have a management class or an officer class. I remember going to a school in Holland, in Apeldoorn, which trained officers in the Dutch police. I spoke to a young man of about 29 who had been an ordinary policeman and wanted to become an officer. He told me that he was not going to be a good officer because he was already 29 and too set in his ways. He thought that he might make a reasonable officer, but not a good one. To be a good one, he said, he should have gone straight into training at 18, 19 or 20. I could well understand what the young man meant.

[Mr. Ashby]

The same applies in most other activities. Why should the police force be exempt from an officer system? We need a management class to manage the time of the police, to make sure that they keep to the rules and to inquire continually into cases in which the rules have been broken. The police force needs managers to manage it; if it had them it would do much to overcome the problems that have arisen at the police stage in cases that come before the Court of Appeal.

Mr. Viggers: I can see the sense and the force of my hon. Friend's argument for the abolition of the county police forces, and others hold the same view. However, I for one feel that the county police authorities make a significant input to police decision making, and I would be interested to know whether my hon. Friend has formed a view on how, if the county police authorities were abolished, this valuable input would be made.

Mr. Ashby: There is absolutely no reason why such an input should not continue to be made. A national police force would not mean the end of organisation at county or regional level. Indeed, it would be impossible to have a national police force without some sort of managerial breakdown at regional level—but that does not preclude a national police force, or regional police forces having slightly different uniforms, such as they have now.

I offer from my county of Leicestershire an example of the importance of having a national police force. The chief constable applied for and was offered the post of commissioner or chief constable of the transport police. He was delighted, until his police committee told him that he could not take the job because it would mean having to pay more into his pension. So the transport police did not get the man they wanted and the chief constable of Leicestershire had to remain in his position. No doubt he was delighted to do so, and he does a tremendous job, but it must have left some bitterness to discover that he could not advance as he should have done just because of a small-minded approach on the part of the police committee and its unwillingness to pay more into his pension.

That leads us to the wider question whether there should be a transport police at all. There are far too many police forces in this country, and we should do away with the transport police, the port police, the atomic energy police and all our other numerous police forces. We should have one police force. This large number of forces has no point any more—they date from an earlier age when we did not have modern communications and modern expertise.

To summarise, there is an urgent need for leasehold reform which will include business premises. It is essential to reform shopping hours, and to reform local government, basing it on small units. We need a fundamental reform of the police to bolster law and order.

I make a final plea for one more change in the processes of law and order. Some appeals have been based on identification, and if one thing cries out for reform it is this area. We must implement Lord Devlin's report of 20 years ago. It said that no one should be convicted on identification alone because it is a most unsafe and unfair method. There should be corroboration in some particular of the identification. I notice the hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green nodding. She is a barrister, and she knows what I am talking about. There is no lawyer who does not feel the utmost unease about convictions resulting from identification alone. One of the most urgently needed reforms of our legal system is to introduce corroboration in some particular to every identification case. To that end we must enact Lord Devlin's recommendation.

The Court of Appeal ducked out of that reform. It had the opportunity to change the law in the case of Turnbull, but it ducked it. It ducked out of insisting on corroboration. The court appears to have ducked the issue in several of the appeals that have come before it, appeals which have been allowed on referral back to the court only after a long interval.

Written confessions are another case in point. I have always been uneasy about them. I well remember the furore in this House when eight service men in the RAF were acquitted at the Central Criminal court of charges of passing information to the then enemy, the Russians. I think that I was the only person who said that that was a great day for British justice. In no other country, and certainly not in Russia, would eight people who had signed confessions be acquitted. It was shown that those confessions contained matters that were totally and utterly wrong and untrue, and the accused always maintained that the confessions were not properly obtained. The jury's verdict showed that they were not properly obtained, and I am loyal to the verdicts of juries.

However, in many confession cases juries have convicted, and in recent cases confessions were found to be invalid and incorrect. Too often the confession is used as a short cut to resolving a case. As in the law relating to identification, the law on confessions should be changed to require the confession to be corroborated by some material particular elsewhere. Urgent reform is required.

I am grateful for being allowed the time of the House, and I hope that those urgent reforms are brought in quickly.

6.31 pm

Mr. Hugh Bayley (York): I am grateful for being called so early in the new Session and I congratulate you, Madam Deputy Speaker, on your appointment. I am also grateful to the electors of York for returning me as their Member of Parliament. I pay tribute to my predecessor, with whom I had many sharp disagreements on many issues. However, in one area of policy he made his mark in the House, as I am sure hon. Members will agree. It was child safety and safety in the home. I also pay tribute to his predecessor, Alex Lyon, who is still remembered in York as an exceptional constituency Member of Parliament. That was sharply brought home to me when my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) visited York a few months ago. People came to her in the street to ask about Alex.

I know that my maiden speech should not be controversial, but I am provoked into responding to a couple of matters raised by the hon. Member for Leicestershire, North-West (Mr. Ashby) who spoke about the problems, as he saw them, of local authorities owning property. In York an extremely old city council has owned property for hundreds of years. There are advantages in that. Shambles, one of our city centre streets, which is the finest and, I think, probably the only complete medieval street in Britain, is there because it has been in public

ownership for hundreds of years. It was taken into public ownership under environmental health legislation. Traditionally, it was the butchers' street in York and taking it into public ownership was a way of providing regulation.

York city council's heritage of owning property in the city centre puts it in the enviable position of being able to levy what I think is the second lowest poll tax in Yorkshire and one of the lowest in the country. It was able to do that because it had the benefit of investment which it built up for the public good over the centuries.

I am also provoked to respond to the suggestion of a need for a national police force. In North Yorkshire, my county, crime has risen from 20,000 reported offences a year when Labour left office in 1979 to 50,000 such offences. The North Yorkshire police force has exceptionally good information technology and perfectly adequate means of communicating with other police forces. We need not a national police force but more police officers and more resources for local authorities to put into crime prevention.

Partly because I have digressed to respond to the comments by the hon. Member for Leicestershire, North-West, I shall spare the House the traditional guided constituency tour that occurs in so many maiden speeches. That is because I suspect that many hon. Members have already visited York. I invite those who have not done so to visit it in the near future. I shall use my time in the House as an advocate for my constituency and my constituents. I hope to be involved in debate on the future of the confectionery industry and on the need for the current GATT talks to retain export restitutions so that food manufacturers in the United Kingdom can compete on equal terms with manufacturers from outside the European Community.

My hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, East (Mrs. Prentice) spoke eloquently about the need to improve rail services for London commuters. She spoke about the desperate state of clapped-out Network SouthEast trains that run from her constituency to the centre of London where the majority of her constituents work. There is a need for new trains and a need for them to be built by BREL in York. It recently received a stop-gap order which will keep the works in business for about 12 months, but we need a much longer programme of orders so that this country retains the ability to manufacture modern aluminium-bodied railway carriages.

BREL in York is the only place in Britain that manufactures modern suburban aluminium-bodied railway carriages. We need the work in York and commuters in the London area need modern trains to provide a good service. There is no point in a citizens charter offering penalty payments to London commuters if British Rail does not have the goods to provide the decent service that the charter requires.

I shall deal primarily with the issue of community care raised by the hon. Member for Wellingborough (Mr. Fry). In less than a year, the Government will start to transfer resources of about £2,000 million from the social security budget to social services departments to provide community care. That will be done from the social security residential and nursing care support budget. Is that enough? Community care may be a better option for many patients, but it is by no means a cheap option. Social services departments throughout the country—those in North Yorkshire are no exception—have felt the financial squeeze of pressure on local government finance and the effects of the poll tax. Will they have the resources to improve not just the quantity but the quality of community care, which was one of the matters stressed in the Gracious Speech? The fact that there is an increasing demand for community care is a tribute to the existence for more than 40 years of a free and demand-led, needs-based national health service.

More people are living to an old age and they need community care in their later years. More children survive infancy. Many of those who would not have survived some years ago are disabled. I have heard many harrowing stories from my constituents about the difficulties that they have in obtaining the community care that they need to enable them to look after their children.

I was approached recently by a family who have a 21-year-old Down's syndrome daughter. The family took the decision to foster a 21-year-old Down's syndrome man. That family will look after their natural child and foster child for as long as they can, but they recognise that at some stage they will no longer be able to care for them. The family hope that the natural child and the foster child will be able to look after each other and provide companionship and security. The family would like to find full-time day care for the two children in the same day centre. North Yorkshire social services department admits that the two children should have that care but it is unable to provide either child with full-time day care. It is certainly unable to provide the two of them with full-time day care at the same day centre.

Had the foster child not been fostered, he would have spent the rest of his life, as he had spent the beginning of it, in an institutional home. He has been given the opportunity to live with a loving family in the community, but without community care support that sort of benefit for those who would otherwise be in institutions is likely to be lost.

I have been dealing also with the case of an extremely severely disabled young woman whose parents are now no longer able to care for her. An argument has developed between the health and social services authorities over who should take responsibility. The young woman is occupying a respite care bed at huge expense to the health authority. There are others who need that bed and she is preventing them from taking it because no long-term provision can be found for her.

The family was offered a bed in a home in Skipton, which is many miles from York. If the young woman had moved to Skipton, her family would no longer have been able to visit daily and she would have felt abandoned. Are we to provide community care services that will ensure that people are cared for in the community in which they live and in which their families can provide support, or are they to be shuffled off to wherever a bed is available?

I welcome the commitment in the Queen's Speech to the citizens charter. Coming from York, I could hardly do otherwise, because four years ago the city produced the very first citizens charter. However, merely to have a citizens charter is not good enough if public services are not provided with the funds to deliver the high quality of service that the charter demands.

North Yorkshire county council is examining a proposal to divest itself of 20 old people's homes. That may save the council money in the short term, but only between now and April of next year when the community care budget is transferred from the Benefits Agency to

[Mr. Hugh Bayley]

local government. The real question is whether the divestment will improve the quality of care that is referred to in the Queen's Speech. Will it improve choice for the residents? Will it improve the opportunity to obtain provision that is local to where people live so that an elderly person who moves into a home is able to retain links and friendships in the community in which she or he lived?

Previously I was employed in a professional capacity as a health economist. I undertook a study not long ago into long-term care for the elderly, which included interviews with 1,300 people living in nursing and residential homes. Among other things, they were asked to express their views about the care that they received, the freedom of choice that they had in their homes and the overall quality of care that was available. Those who lived in local authority homes thought, generally speaking, that the quality of care was good. In the private sector, opinions were extremely variable. Some private homes were extremely good and some were unacceptably poor.

If more old people's homes are to be transferred from the public sector to the private sector, it will be necessary to ensure that the quality of care within those homes is retained. According to the 1,300 residents, the public sector was much better than the private sector when it came to quality control.

The problem with statutory inspection and regulation procedures is that they concentrate on areas that can be measured relatively easily, such as the number of rooms, the number of toilets, staffing and the control of drugs. They do not focus on the key to caring, which is the personal relationship between the carer and the elderly person, the handicapped person or the disabled person. That relationship cannot be measured through the statutory process, but it must be ensured if high-quality care—the sort of care that the citizens charter wishes to ensure—is to be maintained. It is not only North Yorkshire county council that is proposing to divest itself of its old people's homes.

I am concerned about what divestment means in terms of freedom of choice for the residents of old people's homes. Will they have freedom of choice about the life that they lead within the home—for example, whether they can choose when to have a bath, whether they have a choice of different dishes at meal times and whether they can choose the clothes that they buy and wear? All those facets are important, and equally important is whether people retain a choice when it comes to the type of home into which they should move.

As I said, I was involved in interviewing 1,300 residents. Only one in 20 of those in local authority homes said that he or she had even considered moving into a private home. Only one person in 30 in private homes said that he or she had even considered moving into a local authority home. These elderly people had extremely firm views about the type of home and the type of regime in which they wanted to live, and that choice must be maintained. The short-term cash benefits for social service departments of divesting themselves of their directly managed homes, which will run out in a matter of months, mean nothing when set against quality of care and choice for residents.

The residents of these homes will live in them for the rest of their lives. As people who are concerned with the provision of community care, we have a responsibility to ensure that quality and choice within residential homes are as good as they can possibly be. There should be a granny test: if a home is not acceptable for someone's parents or grandparents, it should not be acceptable to anybody else's.

It is all very well to say that the Benefits Agency now or the social services department in future will pay the fees of those who cannot afford to pay for themselves in private sector homes, but that is not always the outcome. I recently received a call from a couple who were extremely frightened on having received a bill for £2,121.95 in respect of the woman's brother two weeks after he had moved into a private care home. They did not have the means to pay the bill. They also received a demand to sign a form to indemnify the home against the fees if the woman's brother was unable to pay them. In addition, they received what I can only call a pressurising letter from the matron of the home.

Fortunately, I was able to take up the matter and say that that couple had absolutely no responsibility to pay the fees on behalf of the woman's brother—and, sure enough, the social security authority agreed to pay the fees. What would have happened if that couple had not found somebody to shout for them at that critical time? What if they had used their life savings to pay the fees? It is not good enough for the public sector to provide services on contract unless it can guarantee that the proper people, at the proper time, will pay for them.

I welcome the community care approach, but there are 6 million unpaid, informal carers throughout the country, without whose services the community care system would fall apart. Ten thousand of those carers are in my constituency, with about the same number in other constituencies. They need a decent carers' benefit and respite care for those for whom they are caring. They need proper community services, such as home help and laundry services, which are not being provided by social services departments because of the financial squeeze on them. Those informal carers are the biggest army of overworked, unpaid, undervalued heroes and heroines in this country. The whole system could fall apart. The closure programme for long-stay institutions will certainly fall apart if carers do not get the back-up and support from social services departments that they need.

The hon. Member for Wellingborough said that it was unclear how social services departments would finance their responsibilities. That is a disgrace. It is only 11 months from when they will have to meet those responsibilities. It is no wonder that those who care for the elderly, the disabled and those with learning difficulties are scared. It is a great shame that £14 billion has been spent on the failed poll tax when it could have been used for decent funding for social services departments to provide the community care that we all know is needed. It is a public spending responsibility that the House must grapple with and come to terms with, and it must do so quickly so that those who depend on that support can know well in advance of April that they will get the backing that they need.

6.52 pm

Mr. Peter Viggers (Gosport): I am grateful to you, Madam Deputy Speaker, for the opportunity to make my maiden speech in this Parliament—although not my

maiden speech as such, as I made that 18 years ago. I wish that after 18 years I had one part of the skill of the hon. Member for York (Mr. Bayley) in marshalling his arguments and winning the ear of the House. I respect the way that he presented his argument. He obviously has a keen interest in his constituency and in the subject about which he spoke most—the welfare of the elderly and others. I have no doubt that he will be keenly listened to in the House in future, and I congratulate him on an exceptionally good speech.

The hon. Gentleman's predecessor, Conal Gregory, was a friend of many in this House, and we very much miss him. I am not sure whether it is his intention to knock out the hon. Gentleman at the next election. If so, Conservative Members will wish him well, despite the praise that I have lavished on the hon. Gentleman. Wherever Conal Gregory is and whatever he plans to do, I am sure that we wish him well and respect the many efforts that he made on behalf of his constituents during the time that he was in this House.

May I say, Madam Deputy Speaker, what a pleasure it is to see you in the Chair? We are all happy that you agreed to accept the position of Deputy Speaker. We have experience of you as a Chairman of Committees, and we know that you are not one from whose path one strays lightly.

The main subject of today's debate is public expenditure. As my constituency contains more service men and women and more service voters than any other, it will be no surprise if I begin with the subject of defence. I regard defence as the first priority of Government and the area upon which they should spend money before they consider anything else.

I am happy that the proposals in the "Options for Change" document produced by the last Conservative Government have been carried out. There were many dire threats about the consequences of the changes and we were told that there would be severe cuts. In fact, the strength of the Navy has diminished only slightly, from about 63,000 to 60,000. Naturally, the Army must bear the brunt of the reductions. It is no longer realistic to imagine that the Warsaw pact's tanks will roll through central Europe. The Warsaw pact has gone, and Russia has even applied to join NATO. We do not need to retain the same level of forces in Germany, so quite realistically the Army is being reduced by about 40,000. The RAF is being reduced from 80,000 to 75,000. The number of civilians employed in the United Kingdom will be reduced from about 140,000 to 120,000.

I regard those reductions in defence spending as realistic, taking account of the reduced threat from our major prospective aggressors, the Warsaw pact countries, which had built up a massive superiority of forces over NATO and the western forces. However, the reductions are not so extreme that they reduce our level of forces below that which takes account of the fact that this is and remains a very dangerous world. Appropriately, it is now proposed that we should make a major contribution to the rapid reaction force, which will be commanded by a British general. That force will be available should there be a crisis in the world that merits such a response.

As the world shrinks and communications continually increase, so different tyrants, dictators and prospective aggressors throughout the world may pose a major problem even for this country, thousands of miles away. Our defence policy is balanced, and it has taken full account of the "Options for Change" proposals. I am happy that we now have balanced forces.

On the matter of other public expenditure, we must always remember that initiative, enterprise and wealth do not grow in Whitehall. It is our duty to lighten the burden on those who have those qualities of initiative, enterprise and wealth production and to ensure that those qualities are properly liberated. We must take full account of the message from the Pacific basin, and perhaps above all from areas such as Hong Kong, Taiwan and Singapore where, because of the light control on industry, it has been able to flourish and produce wealth beyond their and our wildest dreams.

It was said recently that Thatcherism would live on after Mrs. Thatcher. I believe that to be true. I truly believe that our former leader was instrumental in bringing about a watershed of change throughout the world. Those who have had the opportunity, as I am grateful to have had, of travelling widely will know that, even in countries such as China, people are taken by the fact that free enterprise has provided wealth in other parts of the world. At the end of a lunch or banquet, my Chinese hosts would often say, "Mrs. Thatcher, very strong lady."

The message of Thatcherism—that it is possible to reduce the burden of public expenditure and public control —has been taken up around the world. Japan is privatising its railways—a matter of great controversy when I was last there. The message of Thatcherism is being applied successfully around the world.

Since 1979, the Government have returned 46 businesses to the private sector, from which the taxpayer has benefited—I use that word unashamedly—by £41 billion. In 1979, nationalised industries were costing us £50 million per week, £2·5 billion per year. Those same privatised companies are now paying £2 billion per year in corporation tax. The message of Thatcherism and the return of nationalised industries to the private sector has been effective in management and financial terms.

It is necessary to keep public expenditure and the level of taxation down. One message that the Labour party should have learnt during the election is that no one wins friends by proposing to increase taxation, and not only does one not make friends, one does not increase revenue. The reduction in the highest level of taxation after 1979 led to an increase in the proportion of tax paid by the top 5 per cent. of taxpayers from 25 per cent. to 30 per cent. of all income taxation. That proves that the previous Labour Government had been over-taxing to such an extent that the taxation was becoming inefficient and producing less revenue.

There are areas where the Government have been criticised for holding back on public expenditure but where they have in fact been increasing it—something which I proudly support. Two examples are the national health service and the education system. Those two areas can be improved in ways other than increasing the amount of money spent on them. Throwing money at a problem is no answer. My wife is a doctor working for the NHS, and she feels keenly that throwing money at the service is not the answer; it needs better management. I am confident that the separation of the providers and the purchasers of services within the NHS will lead to more efficiency by a reduction in the size of the overall management unit. How can anyone possibly maintain that the NHS, which I

[Mr. Peter Viggers]

understand is the second largest single organisation in the world, second only to the Chinese army, and which has existed since 1945, should remain unreformed?

I believe that the reforms in the NHS are working. My constituents are happy with the service that they receive. In the context of a public sector spending debate, it is relevant to note that, since 1979, we have increased spending on the NHS by 56 per cent. in real terms and we that are now spending some £620 a year on health care for every man, woman and child. That is a large amount of money. Our record is extremely good. Every Labour Government have resulted in an increase in waiting lists; every Conservative Government have resulted in waiting lists being reduced. That is a proud record.

Similarly, we have increased spending on education by some 50 per cent. Here, too, I believe that improved management will play an important part. Teachers in my constituency are happy with the local management of schools, which they feel gives them more control over their budgets, and they are happy with the concept of grant-maintained status. The one school in my constituency which has moved to grant-maintained status is excited about the possibilities that that will give it for spending its own money and providing its own management services. There, too, contrary to the general tenor of my remarks that we would contain public expenditure, we have increased public expenditure, with good results. I believe that there is a high level of satisfaction with the NHS and a growing satisfaction with our education system.

There is one specific area in which there could justifiably be a modest increase in public expenditure and public effort. I refer to one area of trade and industry for which my right hon. Friend the Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) has been given responsibility and which I myself once had some responsibility for. I remember the very few words with which Mrs. Thatcher invited me to take up my office. All I knew was that a reshuffle was in progress. I was called in by the Prime Minister, who said, "Peter, I want you to be responsible for trade and industry—in Northern Ireland." For three years, I had that responsibility, which gave me a chance to compare notes with my counterpart responsible for trade and industry in Great Britain—my noble Friend Lord Young—and to take some account of Britain's export efforts and how they could be improved.

We can learn some lessons from the Japanese Ministry of International Trade and Industry, which co-ordinates trade and industry activities in Japan. I hasten to add that I do not believe in increased control or subsidy of industry within the United Kingdom, but the Government have an opportunity to draw together and co-ordinate the export efforts of some of our largest companies.

I was delighted to see the news today that Trafalgar House, in conjunction with a Japanese organisation, has won a major contract for a bridge in Hong Kong, but we are not always so successful. We can learn from the co-ordination of effort which is put behind industry in other countries which send out a flying squad of experts such as accountants, bankers and lawyers but also engineers to ensure that the best companies are selected and work closely together to win major overseas contracts.

Sometimes, two or three British consortia compete for the same contract, whereas other countries, notably Japan, manage to narrow their competitors down and throw all their weight behind one consortium. In that narrow area, my right hon. Friend the Member for Henley should be encouraged to bid for slightly higher public expenditure in order to bring that idea to fruition. Elsewhere, I believe that public expenditure should be strictly curtailed. The economy is ready for recovery; if we hold back on public spending, that recovery will surely come.

7.7 pm

Mr. Llew Smith (Blaenau Gwent): I have the privilege to follow in the footsteps of Michael Foot and Nye Bevan, and I do not pretend that I can do the job in the way that they did, but I hope that I can do it in a way that is relevant to the communities that they both represented and loved.

Michael Foot is a grand socialist and an inspiration to the Labour movement. As a Member of Parliament he was outspoken, but always in the defence of his constituency. That constituency has a history of struggle, and the past few years have not made much difference to that. In that period, thousands of people have been made redundant because of the rundown of the coal industry, as well as thousands more who were dependent on that industry.

In recent months, many of the jobs which have supposedly replaced those which have been lost have been low-paid, part-time and non-union. Some months ago, I overheard a redundant miner chatting to his friend, expressing pleasure in the fact that he had found alternative employment. But he went on to say that unfortunately, despite having found alternative employment, he was about £100 per week worse off. I suspect that he would have welcomed the introduction of a minimum wage of £3·40 per hour.

The message from my community is that we want jobs. We desperately need jobs, but we do not want jobs at any cost. We want jobs that pay decent wages, which are carried out in decent conditions and which bring dignity to their labour. A higher level of public expenditure would assist our communities, and would begin to create jobs and to defeat the problem of low pay.

I do not want to give the impression that everyone in south Wales is losing out—that the whole population is unemployed or suffering under low pay. In recent years, there have been some winners. For example, John Elfed Jones, chairman of Welsh Water, increased his annual salary from £76,000 in 1990 to £143,000 in 1991. Wynford Evans, chairman of South Wales Electricity, saw his salary increase from £67,000 in 1990 to £120,000 in 1991. Privatisation has obviously worked for some, but not for the majority of my constituents.

Low pay and unemployment are not the only problems confronting Blaenau Gwent, great though they are. It also has problems with its housing stock. Many houses are too old, and others desperately need repair. A high level of public investment is needed to overcome those problems. The local authority needs an opportunity to use the money that it raised from the sale of council houses to build new homes and to repair dilapidated property.

A great deal of television publicity has been given to cardboard city in London, but Wales has its own cardboard cities. Shelter estimates that there are 60,000 homeless people in Wales, and another survey suggested that 80,000 families—around 160,000 people—are living in substandard accommodation. In Wales, more than

200,000 people are either homeless or living in substandard homes. In my opinion, and in the opinion of the community that I represent, that is unacceptable.

Investment is also needed in the national health service. Blaenau Gwent has some of the worst health problems in Wales. The people who make up that community, because of its history, are the real experts when it comes to the health service. They were somewhat surprised some time ago to find that local councillors who cared for and had committed their lives to the NHS were all of a sudden thrown off Gwent health authority, to be replaced mainly by business men. They included a building contractor, a management consultant, a former controller of purchasing and supply for British Gas, a former pharmaceutical industry consultant, and a farmer who specialises in pick-your-own fruit. In fact, I believe that she specialises in strawberries. Perhaps a right hon. or hon. Member could inform me and my community how those skills are relevant to the running of one of the greatest services in the world.

If the national health service is to live up to the dreams of its pioneers, the people running it should be those who have devoted their lives to it, are committed to it, know what is required to improve it, and would be accountable to the people. The NHS was the finest piece of socialist legislation this century. It set out to deal with many of the problems that confront my community, and it will not stand idly by while the health service is devastated.

Blaenau Gwent is also the victim of privatisation. When its bus service was privatised, we were told by the Government—as were people throughout the land—that that would result in a cheaper, more efficient, and cleaner service. Instead, the service has gone into receivership. The shopping centre in Tredegar has also gone into receivership, while other shops and places of interest and entertainment have closed because of the recession. Many shops are also confronted by difficulties caused by subsidence that is probably the result of old mine workings.

Tredegar was once a proud town that was boasted about throughout the land. To pass through it today is a sad experience. I have invited the Secretary of State for Wales to visit that community, and I repeat my invitation in the hope that the right hon. Gentleman will visit it in the months and years ahead, to see how he and the Welsh Office can respond to its problems.

I do not want to give the impression either that Tredegar is the only town with a problem. Its problems are seen time and time again throughout Blaenau Gwent. The Prime Minister's only response in his speech yesterday was to announce more privatisation. Before he privatises the coal industry, I ask him to instruct his Ministers to speak to the experts—to those people who have devoted their lives to the coal industry, and who worked in the old private mines. They will describe the conditions that once prevailed, and explain why it would be so wrong to privatise that industry again.

Michael Foot once described himself as an inveterate peacemonger. I tend to follow in that tradition, which is relevant not only to world peace but to my own community. Although we can always find the money to go to war, we rarely find the money to ensure that people can enjoy their dignity in times of peace. If my constituents are to experience that dignity, they need the money that is spent on preparing for war to be used instead to overcome many of the problems that confront them now. If that is done, those problems will become part of history, and I will be able to report to the House the progress that has been made.

7.16 p.m.

Mr. David Wilshire (Spelthorne): I add my congratulations and good wishes to those that have already been expressed to you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I am sure that you will have a very enjoyable time, and that we will all try to make your life reasonably simple.

Public expenditure is an all-embracing subject, and there is a great temptation to roam over whatever territory one chooses in a debate such as this. I will resist that temptation and focus on a specific aspect of public expenditure, in drawing the attention of the House to particular problems and possible solutions to them. I refer to central Government spending via local government. I deliberately phrase it in that way, for reasons that I shall explain shortly. *[Interruption.]* I have rightly been told off by my hon. Friend the Member for Dartford (Mr. Dunn) for failing to congratulate the hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Smith) on his maiden speech. I ask the hon. Gentleman to accept my sincere apologies: I should have known better.

I was pleased to be congratulated after my terrifying ordeal of making a maiden speech all that time ago, and I wish that I had acquitted myself as well as did the hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent. He began by reminding the House that he was following in the footsteps of Nye Bevan and of Michael Foot, but was unsure of his ability to do so adequately. If all the hon. Gentleman's speeches are as good as that which he made tonight, he will soon be in the same category as his predecessors. I am sure that we can look forward in the years to come to more orations that follow in the footsteps of those two noble parliamentarians.

The hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent said also that his predecessors had served their constituents well and had stood up for their beliefs. Although I do not share the hon. Gentleman's beliefs, I find it easiest to have respect for the opponent who fights hard for his or her constituents and who stands up unashamedly for his or her beliefs. The hon. Gentleman did both tonight, and I am sure that he will continue to do so. If he does, he will gain my respect and that of the whole House. I again ask the hon. Gentleman to accept my apologies for my earlier bad manners.

I return to the subject of central Government spending by local government. I put it that way deliberately, for reasons with which I shall deal shortly. The House should consider the issue, because large amounts of central Government money are involved, and at present it is proving incredibly difficult to target the money in the way intended by the providers. Let me give an example.

In the last public expenditure round, the Government took the view that a certain sum was necessary to provide adequate social services for my county of Surrey. That indeed is the proper role of central Government. The Government passed the money, by way of the standard spending assessment, through the Department of the Environment to Surrey county council. Now, £8 million of the money earmarked for Surrey's social services is being spent on other services provided by the county council. Hon. Members know the size of the mailbags that we receive when social services provision is not of the

[Mr. David Wilshire]

standard that constituents want. That is an example of how difficult it is for a Government of any political persuasion to target funds under the present system.

My third reason for drawing attention to the problem is the fact that local government expenditure has proved extremely difficult to control—again, irrespective of the political colour of the central Administration. Successive Governments have tried to control it, and have encountered problems. When Governments say that they want to sort out the spending of public money by local government, they really mean that they want to get public expenditure under control.

If our aim is to control the spending of public money via local government, surely trying to control local government income is not the most effective method. When I have difficulties with my bank balance, it is the expenditure involved with which I must deal first. Surely it is self-evident, at least in private circles, that, when we experience expenditure problems, we must control expenditure. That is the first lesson that I would draw from 20 years of trying to do something about local government expenditure.

There is no point in arguing about whether local government expenditure needs to be controlled. All expenditure, public or private, needs to be controlled. Money is a finite resource, and there is never enough to meet all needs. It must be controlled, whether we like it or not; and I believe that it must be controlled directly. Over the years, every attempt to control this part of public expenditure by means of income control has failed. As each method proves unsuccessful, another method is invented, even more draconian than the last and even sillier. There are plenty of absurd examples.

How, then, do we control local government expenditure? I have four suggestions. First, the Government must be certain that they have identified the source of the money involved. Secondly, they must be certain that they have identified the real purpose of the expenditure. Thirdly, they must be clear about who controls what is going on. Finally, they must ensure that there is a link between the providers and the client or customer.

All that may strike hon. Members on both sides of the House as eminently obvious. Why do we need to discuss something that is self-evident? The answer is that, although the solution may seem obvious, things are being handled badly at present.

First, let us consider the need to identify the source of the funds. The argument goes like this. There are many kinds of provision, and many kinds of expenditure—public expenditure, voluntary sector expenditure and quango expenditure, for example. Each type of expenditure needs to be controlled in a different way, and it is therefore vital for us to be clear about the source of the finance.

Probably the best illustration of the wrong way in which to categorise public expenditure is provided by the public-expenditure category called local government spending. That is because a range of sources is involved. There are councils' fees and charges; there is agency allocation of money—for instance, transport supplementary grants; there is the local tax, whether it be community charge, council tax or rates. Then there is the grant from central Government. Each of those different sources requires a different method of control. For example, the marketplace controls fees and charges: a council can charge only what the market will bear for, say, swimming facilities. But the marketplace does not and cannot control the amount that is provided by central Government.

If we are to control this part of public expenditure, we must be absolutely clear about the source of finance. That is why I said that I wanted to discuss the issue of central Government spending via local government, for that is what the central grant is—central Government expenditure. Anyone in the Treasury will confirm that. It needs to be identified for what it is, and discussed separately.

There is another catch. In saying that we need to control central Government expenditure via local government, we may forget that central Government expenditure is a pretty poor category as a source of money. It includes money from the Departments of Transport, Education and Health, from the Home Office and from many other Government Departments. We need to be clear about the source of every element of the central Government grant.

Secondly, we need to be clear about the purpose of the expenditure. That, too, may sound obvious, but far too many spending categories are vague; many are far too large or far too small; and even more are just plain confusing. We talk readily in the House about public expenditure on education, as though education spending were an entirely proper category of expenditure which we could control. But when a local councillor talks about education spending, he or she is talking about spending money on primary schools, secondary schools, clothing grants and remedial help for children: that is what councillors understand by the label "education".

An Education Minister, however, takes education spending to mean expenditure on all schools and on further and higher education, but certainly does not take it to mean expenditure on clothing or remedial help, which are the responsibilities of the Department of Social Security and the Department of Health respectively. It is small wonder that there is poor control of education spending, when two people engaged in a debate on the subject find that they are talking about different issues.

There is another reason for the confusion. Neither the councillor nor the Education Minister is talking about the totality of education, for neither is talking about expenditure on private schools or tutors. If we are to control public expenditure, we must get the categories right.

Thirdly, we must sort out who controls each section of public expenditure. That brings us straight into a debate that has been going on ever since local government began—the debate about the nature of the real relationship between central Government and local authorities in terms of expenditure.

There are those on both sides of the House who believe that local government should be left to get on with its own spending and that one solution would be less interference. However, central Government have a role in all expenditure, whether it is public or private. The nature of a country's economy is a concern of central Government. Some of my colleagues are great believers in non-intervention, but even a decision by central Government not to intervene has a profound effect upon public expenditure and the national economy. Therefore, the two extremes of saying that we need do nothing or that we must do everything do not hold water.

We cannot get away from the fact that there must be central Government involvement. Therefore, we must ask what central Government should be involved in. I can offer only one guiding principle: he who pays the piper calls the tune. In my Surrey example, central Government believed that they were making available £8 million for what they had decided was a correct priority. However, that £8 million was not spent on that priority.

It is small wonder that people in the Department of Social Security and the Department of Health are angry to discover that the money is not being spent on what they decided was a correct priority. The principle of he who pays the piper must apply if central Government are providing money for a specific purpose. Whether money is spent by central Government, local government or a voluntary agency, the provider of the funds must have control.

There are obstacles to my argument. My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Social Security needs to make money available to local government. What does she have to do? She provides that money for the Department of the Environment, which then passes it on as a block grant. There is another reason why targeting and control are not much good. If all the Departments that are providing money for local government pass it on to the Department of the Environment, there is an intermediary. Intermediaries in the chain of control are not a good idea.

Another problem is that both local government, in its capacity as a mini-Government, and the Department of the Environment have their own priorities and policies, so my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State passes money to the Department of the Environment which imposes its priorities, and when the money is passed to, for example, Surrey, there is a second lot of priorities. There is no effective control in that method.

We need to know what the tests could be for controlling such expenditure. For example, there is no way in which local taxation could fund an expensive service such as education. An expensive service will almost certainly need to be controlled by central Government if there is to be effective control of expenditure. However, if one focuses on local democracy, that is a different argument—one may end up sacrificing effective control to achieve it. Thus, the first test is, if it is expensive, it is central.

The second test must be who sets the standards. I do not think that the House would become excited about whether the grass verges in my constituency of Spelthorne were kept half an inch high or an inch high. That is a matter for the worthy burghers of Spelthorne to decide. However, from the newspapers and my mailbag, I get the impression that, if the standard of literacy in Cornwall is different from that in Kent, mayhem would break out in the House because that should not be tolerated.

That tells us something about who should control expenditure on reading. Although some standards can be set locally, things may change. I cannot imagine a time when the length of grass in Spelthorne will become controversial, but one must be flexible in case a standard suddenly becomes controversial.

Having said that he who pays the piper must have control and that whoever sets the standards should have the final say, if that increasingly becomes central Government, where does that leave local government? Regardless of who is providing the money or controlling the public expenditure, we must ensure that there is some mechanism that allows local needs and priorities to be brought to bear. That is the role of local government.

I know from my experience on a local council—many of my colleagues also have a background in local government—that although councils do not control hospitals, if there is a proposal to close a hospital, the council becomes agitated. If enough people complain that there is not a decent supermarket, councillors become concerned.

That is the local input to the totality of the provision of services and the spending of money. It has nothing to do with whether local government is the provider. Therefore, my argument that he who pays the piper should control spending does not undermine local government input into the spending of money and the provision of services.

Mr. Bob Dunn (Dartford): I am very interested in what my hon. Friend is saying. If, inevitably, the vast majority, or indeed the totality, of secondary schools become grant-maintained, who should have the authority to decide expenditure? For example, in previous years a lower level of expenditure has been followed in secondary schools in Kent compared with secondary schools in London. If all schools in Kent were to become grant-maintained, who would have the authority to bring up the levels of spending in the county? Would it be the burghers of Kent or the Government? That is a conundrum.

Mr. Wilshire: Yes, it is a conundrum. However, what must be made clear in my argument is that the line of communication is from the school to the Department of Education and Science, because that is where the money is coming from. That is the strength of the grant-maintained system. A school that feels hard done by can argue with the provider of money rather than with county hall, which is simply the middle man. In this analysis, I would not try to answer the question in detail, but the principle of talking directly to the provider of funds bears out my thesis.

Where does this lead us? The Government must turn their mind to controlling expenditure by local government. They must do that by controlling expenditure, not income. We have tried that with the rates and the comunity charge, and we are now trying the council tax. Until we grasp the nettle of controlling expenditure directly, the House will again and again be asked to make changes.

If one is to identify the source of the funds and ensure that the provider provides directly, the Government will have to grasp another nettle. That involves taking the Department of the Environment out of the business of funding services provided by local government. That is a major change, but I believe that it is necessary. The only control that the Department of the Environment should have over a service provided by local government is when it is the provider of the money rather than the processor of the money.

We must be clear about purpose. We must look hard when we say that we want a specific sum to be spent on such and such. We must ring-fence it and ensure that it is spent properly. That requires a fair amount of rethinking by the Treasury.

We need a new role for local government. Happily, we have all started to talk about the enabling role of local government. I believe that this approach to local government expenditure leads to a greater enabling role for local government.

[Mr. Wilshire]

Those of us who were here during the last Parliament and those who have been here a great deal longer than I have will remember that public expenditure has always been an issue. If my crystal ball is any good, I believe that it will become a big issue in the months ahead. If we are to get on top of the problems of public expenditure now and in the future we must deal with local government expenditure. If we are to do that, major reforms in our way of controlling local government expenditure are still necessary, and I urge them on the Government.

7.39 pm

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): I have been listening as carefully as I can to the argument about who should control local government expenditure. One thing is certain: being on a local authority today is very different from what it was when my hon. Friend the Member for Jarrow (Mr. Dixon) and I were in local government in the 1960s—and when my hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) was in local government, too.

Then we could do things without central Government interfering. I remember when we could put in for spending money on slum clearance on a scale gigantic for the size of the authority, which covered a population of about 10,000. We got grants from central Government to do that, and we used to be able to balance the books. We could decide the rents. There was no busybody from central Government telling us what rents in Clay Cross should be.

When I talk to people on local authorities nowadays, despite all that the hon. Member for Spelthorne (Mr. Wilshire) has said, the main burden of the argument that I hear from Labour councillors is that they do not have the power to do what they would like to do. They cannot build houses as they used to, although they have the money to do it.

Mr. Wilshire: The hon. Gentleman may view what I am about to say as an attempt to deflect some of his wrath away from my direction, but is not meant in that way. The example that he cites probably makes my point. He talks about central Government trying to control rents. I argued that an attempt to control income—rent is income—is doomed to failure. So, for once, we may be making the same point. That may upset the hon. Gentleman rather than pleasing him.

Mr. Skinner: If I introduce a Bill in this Session of Parliament to give local authorities the power to spend their capital receipts from council house sales on building houses in order to get rid of some of the cardboard boxes that litter every town and city in Britain, will the hon. Gentleman support me?

Mr. Wilshire: The hon. Gentleman has not extended the thought process that I was using. I agreed with him about income, but he has now switched to expenditure, and it is expenditure that we wish to control. If he is inviting me to vote with him to abolish expenditure control, he will have a long wait.

Mr. Skinner: Now I have got the gist of it. I had thought that the hon. Gentleman was on a flight of fantasy —but now we get down to it: he is the same as all the other Tories, the same as the rest of the ragbag over there. They all believe in the same thing. They do not believe that local people in the towns and cities controlled by Labour should have the power to build houses so as to put roofs over the heads of the 200,000 homeless people.

We have millions of tons of bricks; the London Brick Company has millions of bricks. A quarter of a million people in the construction industry are without jobs. There are all those homeless people who do not know where to live, and it costs a small fortune to lodge them in bed-and-breakfast accommodation in many London areas. Yet the Government are so besotted with controlling local government from the centre that they will not allow local people to decide to build some houses.

That is all that is needed—it is a question of political will. The hon. Gentleman can potter about with figures as long as he likes, but it will not make any difference to the basic fact that we need a Government who will give local authorities the power to build houses so that they can start rehousing people. If some of the capital receipts could be used, the dole queues would go down, too.

The hon. Member for Kent talked about opted-out schools. The hon. Member for Kent——

Mr. Dunn: Dartford.

Mr. Skinner: Dartford is one bit of Kent. The hon. Member for Dartford (Mr. Dunn) was a Minister at one time—until Mrs. Thatcher decided to sack him during the holidays. She wanted to have a big change-round and she said, "Sack Dunn." That was the word that went round, but as it happened during the holidays people had gone off to the four corners of the world, and they could not find Dunn. The big clear-out was to take place in October, and the hon. Member for Dartford, who was a junior Minister at the Department of Education, was still in his job when he came back, because Mrs. Thatcher could not find him. He had gone as far away as her son Mark—whom she managed to discover, although it cost a bob or two.

Mr. Dunn: That story is embellished more and more as time goes on. I was not sacked in October——

Mr. Skinner: But the hon. Gentleman was sacked?

Mr. Dunn: —but in July. Yes, I was sacked; I do not deny that.

Mr. Skinner: Later on.

Mr. Dunn: No, it was in July 1988. I was there when I was sacked and the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) was not.

When the hon. Gentleman was talking about schools, he implied that the 1960s and the 1970s were a golden age when there was no governmental interference. He is now in his seventh decade, so he will remember the time when Labour Secretaries of State for Education and Science said to local authorities, "If you do not go comprehensive, we will starve you of cash and withdraw your money." That happened with the Labour Governments of 1964-70 and 1974-79, and it is a good example of governmental interference.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. So far I have been fairly mild, by my standards, but I deplore interventions which turn into speeches.

Mr. Skinner: If I may briefly reply to the hon. Member for Dartford, Madam Deputy Speaker, I must say that I do not recall the Government ever withdrawing money

from Derbyshire county council because it had not gone comprehensive. I was on that council between 1964 and 1970, and, despite six years of Labour Government, there were only two comprehensive schools in the whole of Derbyshire. But no money was withdrawn from Derbyshire, although it had not obeyed the diktats to which the hon. Gentleman referred. Some people may have said that it would be a good idea to withdraw money, but it did not take place.

When making his speech about local government, the hon. Member for Spelthorne gave the impression that local government could implement Acts of Parliament without any extra money. There have been at least 10 major Acts affecting local government during the past 10 years—the House passes at least one every year—and they have cost local government a small fortune to implement. The Government expect local government to find the money from within their existing budgets, without being able to use what they have already got. That is one reason why rates shot through the roof.

Another reason why rates increased was that the Government decided to withdraw about £60 billion-worth of rate support grant equivalent over the years. Local government tried to keep up with the mandatory Acts of Parliament that it had to carry out, so the rates had to increase and local government got the blame.

That is where the poll tax came in, and that cost another £14 billion. The Government talk about saving money, yet they are the ones who spent all that money on the poll tax. There are many Conservative Members still in the House who went trooping through the Lobbies, glad to vote the poll tax through. The result was that local government was burdened with £14 billion-worth of extra expenditure, as well as having £60 billion less in rate support grant.

At the same time, local government was having to deal with the fact that, as a result of the advances in medical science, people now live longer. That means that social services departments in every local authority have to pay more for each person in their area who manages to hang on for another two, three or four years. That is one reason for the massive proportionate increase in the sum that has to be spent by local government, even when the population may remain roughly the same.

The same is true of the disabled. If people live longer, they are disabled for longer, and the net result is that thousands of people in every constituency need more money from the social services for aids and appliances, such as stair lifts and ramps. Yet the Government tend to think that it is possible for local government money to be cut and for local government to manage to do the job it is expected to do.

Crime has gone up about threefold in many towns and cities since the Government came to power. Local authorities have to deal with that, except in London where it is dealt with differently. Where do the Government expect local authorities to get the money from?

In Derbyshire, we had a bizarre situation the other week. The chief constable of the West Midlands—he and his force have been guilty of so much malpractice and so many faulty decisions in their area—was appointed to carry out a survey of Derbyshire police.

Mr. Don Dixon (Jarrow): The hon. Member for Spelthorne (Mr. Wilshire) is leaving.

Mr. Skinner: He has probably gone to do some more reckoning up.

The chief constable of the West Midlands is criticising the local authority in Derbyshire when everyone knows that the crime rate in some British cities, including London, has gone through the roof.

There has been mention of the citizens charter. Conservative Members give the impression that the citizens charter is a wonderful and beautiful thing. It is just a con trick by the Prime Minister. When we get to the next election, many people will find that out.

In my constituency, somebody talked to me about dioxin not long ago. He said, "Ey up, Dennis, can we complain under the citizens charter to get rid of the dioxin in the milk?" I said, "That's a good idea, but you had better check on it." The truth is that whenever one comes up against a problem of that dimension—all the local community wants to make a complaint to ensure that the matter is resolved—the citizens charter means absolutely nothing.

Last June, milk was contaminated by dioxin. The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food came to the Dispatch Box and told us that it would be a nine days' wonder. He gave the impression that it would all be resolved by the end of June or by July. It is now next May, yet there are still three farmers in my constituency who are not allowed to farm because the dioxin is still there. What good is the citizens charter for those people?

If we want to help people in the community, there is another way in which to do so. We could spend more money on the citizens advice bureaux, because in reality they did the job of the citizens charter. Thousands of people in every constituency trotted along to the citizens advice bureaux. What did the Government do? They cut the money for the citizens advice bureaux, yet they have the cheek to talk about a citizens charter.

We used to have a system of widespread appeals on every aspect of social security legislation. We did not need a citizens charter for that. People could ask the social security for a grant, and if they did not get one they could appeal. What did the Government do? They believe in a citizens charter, but a few years ago the Prime Minister introduced legislation to stop people having the right to appeal when they were turned down for a grant. On top of that, the Government told people that they would have to have a loan and get deeper into debt. That is hypocrisy on a grand scale.

The same is true for all those on hospital waiting lists. What good is the citizens charter to them? We can go through all the aspects of where it hurts in life. What rights do people have to make a complaint against the Government? In almost every respect, people have had rights taken away.

It was not long ago that we argued in the House about the right for law centres to be kept in operation. There used to be law centres in most large towns and cities. What did the Government do? They closed down many of them. The same is true of legal aid. If we really want to help people to make a complaint against the Government, the state or local authorities, what better than to extend the amount of legal aid available? The citizens charter is just a con trick to give people the impression that the Government are giving them rights. The truth is that the Government have taken them all away.

Several hon. Members have referred today to borrowing and public expenditure. The Chief Secretary to

[Mr. Skinner]

the Treasury, who is dealing with cutting expenditure, talked about getting rid of the public sector borrowing requirement in the "medium term". I have heard the jargon in here for years, including "medium term", "mirrored J-curve" and "crawling peg". I have heard them all. They come and go like the names of washing powders, although they are important at the time. People talk about them as if they will last for ever.

I asked the Chief Secretary what he meant by "medium term" and when the PSBR—which is supposed to be £28 billion, but which is more likely to be about £35 billion in the autumn statement—would come back into balance. he said that it would be in the "medium term". I asked him what the "medium term" was. We all know that in the past two years the PSBR has increased geometrically, so we know that it will not be in balance by the end of this Parliament. The Government do not have a cat in hell's chance of getting the budget into balance.

Only two years ago, there was a tiny PSBR. The following year, it was up to £14 billion and this year it is supposed to be £28 billion. We then have the £2 billion of tax cuts and we shall have an autumn statement. I am going to take a chance on it: I am prepared to bet that the PSBR will be closer to £35 billion by the next budget in March than it will be to £28 billion.

The Government have the cheek to tell people that the Labour party is not fit to run the country. This gang of supposedly clever business men and women—most of them have been moonlighting Members of Parliament in their time, who made money hand over fist before they became Ministers—have told us that we are not fit to govern. Yet this Government had more than £100 billion of North sea oil tax receipts and £40 billion of privatisation receipts. They have managed to get the country into debt to the tune of £28 billion, according to the official figures. That is how bad the Government are.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: The answer to the conundrum may be in the Red Book, as the Prime Minister suggested yesterday. It seems that borrowing will rise next year to £32 billion, according to the Red Book. It will then decline the following year to £25 billion, then to £19 billion and then to £6 billion. I understand that that is the period that the Government determine as being "medium term".

Table 2A.2 on page 16 of the Red Book deals with where the money will come from. That table deals with the burden of taxation. If I recall correctly, during a press conference in the general election campaign, the Prime Minister was asked by Mr. Anthony Bevins, the political editor of *The Independent*, "What does this table mean?"

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I have reminded a Conservative Member that he was supposed to be making a brief intervention, not a speech. I must therefore ask the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) to resume his speech.

Mr. Skinner: My hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) made the point that buried away in the Red Book are figures that show that the Government have been pulling a fast one. They hoped that nobody would discover it. The truth is that the Government are up to their necks in debt. That is the bottom line. That clever set of business men and women have got the country up to its neck in debt. If the truth had come out at the election and had not been subjected to such treatment by the tabloid press about Labour taxes and so on—untrue reports concerning about £1,250 for everybody in Britain—and the leaflet to which my hon. Friend referred earlier, and if people had known what was in the Red Book and how they were being conned by the Government, the result could have been different.

Mr. Campbell-Savours *rose*——

Mr. Skinner: If my hon. Friend wants to complete what he tried to say, by all means I shall give way to him.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I refer my hon. Friend to table 2A.2 in the Red Book, which is where the information is hidden away. It shows that the Government are projecting an increase in the burden of taxation from 35·75 per cent. of non-North sea money GDP to 38 per cent. They are predicting an increase at the very same time and during the same medium-term period as they are predicting a reduction in borrowing. Perhaps my hon. Friend, or even the Secretary of State, will be able to explain the connection between the two.

Mr. Skinner: We all know that, in their first 13 years, the Tory Government increased taxes. Most people think that taxes mean income tax, but the truth is that they are much wider than that. We are talking about customs and excise and value added tax, which has more than doubled. The truth is that the Tories have increased tax from about 34 per cent., or just over, in 1979 to about 36 or 37 per cent. in the past year. There was a minor reduction because of the £2 billion in handouts—bribes—just before the election, but by and large the Tories have increased the total tax take. My hon. Friend is saying that hidden away in the Red Book is a proposition that, to balance the books in the medium term, there will be another increase in tax, and the chances are that VAT will be up to about 25 per cent.

Mr. Jacques Arnold (Gravesham): If the hon. Gentleman wants to do something about debt, how would he advise the Labour party to cope with the debt that was incurred by the Sheffield extravaganza?

Mr. Skinner: I shall tell the hon. Gentleman what I would do to resolve some of the problems in Britain. I would have a fully employed economy. There are 3 million people out of work, but the official figure is only 2·7 million. When we add on all the kids on slave labour schemes and all the women who have not registered but were previously in work, we are talking about 3·5 million people without a job and on that pile of human misery known as the dole queue. The cost is equal to at least £8,000 per person to be unemployed per annum. It is costing the country more than £30 billion to keep those people idle.

That is what I would have said at Sheffield if I had been given the chance. As the hon. Member for Gravesham (Mr. Arnold) is so keen, I would have made that statement on television, but for some reason or other the television managers did not want to hear me; they painted me out of the picture during the general election campaign.

Mr. Arnold *rose*——

Mr. Skinner: I shall not give way. You, Madam Deputy Speaker, made it clear that you did not want such interventions. The hon. Gentleman has had one crack of

the whip. He wants to go back to Kent and guard his back. Almost certainly he will be in the next batch of 40 or 50 hon. Members who lose their seats at the next election. The hon. Gentleman should not come rabbiting to me. He has made noises on the Back Benches during the past five years and he had not even the guts to vote against the poll tax. I do not need lectures about Sheffield or anything else. I am telling the hon. Gentleman where I would get the money to finance the budget.

I would have a fully employed economy. Everybody knows that we cannot place every person in work, but, at one time in the post-war period, we never had more than about 500,000 or 600,000 out of work—what they call cyclical unemployment. If we reduced unemployment to that level, we would save £25 billion. We would be near enough to wiping out the public sector borrowing requirement. Once we get people back into work, they pay tax and insurance. I ask my hon. Friends who have influence in the higher echelons of the Labour party to make sure that we list full employment in the next manifesto. Let us make sure that we talk about it well in advance of the next general election. That is one way to balance the books.

I shall give hon. Members some more tips. In the first 10 years of the Thatcher Government, the richest 1 per cent. in Britain received £26·2 billion in tax cuts. If I were the Chancellor of the Exchequer in a Labour Government, I would haul back that money in the first 12 months. I do not believe that the richest 1 per cent. in Britain, which includes the Queen, who does not pay any taxes, should get away with that kind of money when people live in cardboard boxes, without a roof over their heads, and when pensioners have to scratch by on about £50 a week.

Mr. Simon Burns (Chelmsford): Does the hon. Gentleman believe that, when the Labour leadership elections are out of the way, the Labour party will go down the route advocated by the hon. Gentleman, or will his party agree with his hon. Friend the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field), who earlier advocated that the Labour party should cut the standard rate of income tax to 18p in the pound as a long-term objective?

Mr. Skinner: I did not hear the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field). I think that he is trying to paint another rainbow alliance, but I do not want to do him a disservice—it is probably something of that order.

I make it plain that I believe that the rich had it pretty good during the Thatcher years. It is time that that money was brought back. I do not believe that they should be allowed to make that money. On top of that, most of the people we are talking about have had massive salary increases of £50,000, £100,000 or £200,000 a year. About 200 Tory Members in the previous Parliament—I suppose it will be the same in this Parliament—were not content with salaries of £30,000. They were picking up moonlighting jobs at £100,000 a time. Some of them had as many as 10 directorships in the past few years. They were making money hand over fist.

Peter Walker left office to look after the family. In 12 months he had 10 directorships, probably the equivalent of 100,000 quid. The ex-Chancellor of the Exchequer Lawson picked up about £200,000 for a two-day week at a bank. Those people have the cheek to talk to us about the rich and about where the money is coming from. I would have no hesitation in bringing back that money. *[Interruption.]* And I would tax the Queen as well. Every survey shows that 80 per cent. of the population believe that that should be the case.

We could go further on defence. I have heard hon. Members talk about defence cuts. In the 20 years that I have been in the House we have always heard about Labour cutting defence, but, in the past two or three years, which party has cut defence? The answer is the Tory party. It really is an amazing turn of events. Conservative Members have been cutting defence expenditure and accusing us of being unpatriotic.

I would reduce defence expenditure. I do not see the point in Britain spending more money per head of population than European countries such as Germany. I just do not see the sense of it. I know that Germany is going through some difficulties now because we have got a good strike on. *[Laughter.]* I do not knock it. I believe in workers fighting for their rights. There is nothing wrong in that. Conservative Members should not laugh too loud and too long. Do not think for a moment that the people who create the wealth—the workers—will not take action some time in the future. It always turns full circle. It may be a little passive at the moment, but, make no mistake, it will change eventually.

I would save about £7 billion on defence and use that for the national health service, to pay better pensions to old-age pensioners and to give a little bit more to the disabled. I will tell the House where I would save some more money. This is not Labour party policy, and it was not discussed in the election campaign by those in power. I would save some money in Northern Ireland. It is costing at least £1 billion per annum to keep the troops in Northern Ireland. I would bring them out. It cannot be done straight away, but I would draw up a plan. We have had 20-odd years of the killing fields of Northern Ireland.

Ministers come to the Dispatch Box one after the other and say, "Things will get better. We have a new initiative." We listen to them for two years and then they get sacked and someone else is put there who comes up with another initiative. But those initiatives do not resolve the problem of self-determination in Northern Ireland. So I would save another £1 billion in Northern Ireland.

I would not have spent the £3 billion on the Falklands adventure. That is what it cost. So when people say to me, "Where is the money coming from?", I can show where I could save £50 billion already. I am prepared to balance my books, unlike the Government who have got us into this unholy mess.

The same is true of the Common Market. Britain pays £17 per week for every family in Britain to finance the tinpot common agricultural policy. Make no mistake: if I had that brief, I would put a stop to that.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: That is our policy now, Dennis.

Mr. Skinner: Well, it is not mine. My hon. Friend has a different policy on the Common Market from me. If he wants me to reveal my policy here in the House of Commons, I will. Before we entered the Common Market, which has been an unmitigated disaster, we had a deficiency payment system for farmers. After 20-odd years in the Common Market, many farmers—although not all; many gentlemen farmers are happy—who remember the deficiency payments system say, "Yes, it was a better system than the one that we have now."

[Mr. Skinner]

If my hon. Friend believes that the Common Market's halcyon days are not over, he should simply read the newspapers. The Common Market is not what it was in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. The economic growth days have gone.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: All I am saying to my hon. Friend is that Labour party policy at the last election was to secure a massive reduction in our payment into the agricultural budget. We advocated the reform of market pricing for agricultural products. To what extent is my position different from that of my hon. Friend on these matters and, in particular, on agriculture?

Mr. Skinner: I read the manifesto closely. I was involved in the policy review. Although my hon. Friend might have believed the jargon that he read in the newspapers, the truth is that at no time was a statement made about the precise amount that a Laour Government would save on the common agricultural policy. Many things were said which might have given that impression, but that was not the precise nature of what we fought the election on.

I have an honest difference of opinion with my hon. Friend. We shall come home to this cake and milk eventually because the Common Market and political union will not be on offer much longer. It will not happen. I say here and now that there will never be a time when someone with the name of Baron von Traushauser will stand for Labour in Bolsover and win in a general election. We all know that it will not happen. If people cannot accept the bottom line, why do they parade all these wonderful virtues of political union? That is what it means at the end of the day.

The right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Sir D. Steel), who used to be Leader of the Liberal party——

Mr. Campbell-Savours: The Liberals are not here.

Mr. Skinner: They are never here. We know that they are not here. The right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale thought that he could be the great political adventurer, trot across to Italy and fight in a Common Market election. What happened to him? He got about as many votes as Lord Sutch did, or his old mate David Owen did when he finished up.

I would love to be able to say that there will be world government. I want it. I believe that that is how we could achieve socialism on a grand scale. But I am not a fool. I see the Scots arguing the toss about breaking away from the United Kingdom. I do not knock that, if that is what they want. But what does it tell me? It tells me that they have a different culture and want to have it identified. That is the real world.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Conservative Members are agreeing with my hon. Friend.

Mr. Skinner: I do not worry what anyone says, because I know in my heart that I am right. I know that wasting time and energy on a grand political design which has been foisted on us from the top will not work. If we were dealing with socialists in the Common Market, it would be different. Does my hon. Friend suggest for a minute that Helmut Kohl is a socialist who has come from the working class?

Mr. Burns: What about Jacques Delors?

Mr. Skinner: I do not think that he is any different.

I suggest that the Common Market is coming from the top downwards. From a socialist point of view, if any substantial changes are to take place they must come from the bottom up. The Common Market is an apparatus designed by people such as Shirley Poppins, Dr. Death, Woy of the Wadicals and all that gang. Where are they now? Can they be found? They are people who pass through political history and disappear. They have great ideas. They used the Labour party for 15 or 20 years to pursue their tinpot ideas.

We have to read our history not only of Britain but of all the other countries. There have been a thousand treaties between Britain and other western European countries. Where are most of those treaties now? If we ask the Library, it will tell us. They are in the dustbin of history. They do not last for ever. I have no doubt that for a short period some people were excited and were caught in the time warp. They believed that those treaties would last for ever. But treaties do not last for ever. People ought to understand that.

The idea of a European currency and a European bank will not happen. Why bother? We have to build socialism on our own plot of land. There is nothing wrong with building it in a much wider field, but we must prove that we can do it on our own turf. That is what I am about. That is why I put forward these propositions to balance the books, achieve full employment, and give local authorities the power to build houses again and spend more money on schools and hospitals for an aging population.

If the other thing happens, so be it, but I will not put the horse before the cart. That is what some of our people will have to understand. That is why, when it comes to the vote on Maastricht, I want my hon. Friends to vote with me against it. If all of us on these Benches do the same, the Government will be in trouble because they have a majority of only 21. If we can get all our people to vote against Maastricht, we shall test those on the other side who reckon that they will cast their vote against it. Who will bail out the Government? It will be a great political event because the Liberals will bail out the Tory Government and be sunk for ever. They did not do very well in the general election, but they will go even further down the pan.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: My hon. Friend has put a powerful case, but, as he knows, I do not agree with much of what he says on European union. What does he feel about the social chapter, which will bring to this country standards that he would want to support and which are not otherwise available under the Government?

Mr. Skinner: I have no hang-up about improvements for workers, wherever they come from. If someone introduces a Bill to improve the lot of workers and take a little power away from the bosses—we cannot enhance the power of workers unless we take power away from somewhere else—I would support it. There is no yellow brick road along which everyone can walk together and live happily ever after. That is not real political life. If a

social chapter clause is introduced which says that workers in Britain will be given 10 weeks holiday, just as Members of Parliament have during the long recess, I would not care who introduces it. But it will not come. The Government are incapable of delivering it because the bosses in the Common Market run the show, and they will not give all workers 10 weeks' holiday in the summer. If they did so, I have no doubts about what I would do.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Will my hon. Friend be just a little more clear?

Mr. Skinner: I have been clear.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: If it were possible to secure within the treaty, when we legislate for it in the House, amendments that carry the areas about which the Labour party is concerned, would my hon. Friend then be tempted into the Lobby to support it on the basis that he was supporting principles that he holds so dearly to his heart?

Mr. Skinner: My hon. Friend has not checked the record. On a couple of occasions, two minor social security matters relating to care, one of which my hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) will remember, went before the European Court. I was then asked whether I was in a dilemma over it and I said that of course I was not. Anything that advances the cause of working people, wherever it comes from, does not place me in a dilemma. But I shall not vote for the Maastricht treaty because it is a pig in a poke. My hon. Friend knows that there are no such provisions in the Maastricht treaty——

Mr. Campbell-Savours: At the moment.

Mr. Skinner: And there never will be, because the bosses run the Common Market.

Has my hon. Friend ever stopped to think about the political complexion of the countries in the Common Market? There are only two socialist countries among the 12, and they are not really socialist, so there is none. That is even worse.

Mr. Jacques Arnold: Then why is the Labour party so much in favour of it?

Mr. Skinner: I am speaking for myself. I am trying to make a statement on the Queen's Speech, but I have been drawn into questions on the Common Market. I have made my position clear. It is not new. Many people know where I stand on the issue. I am simply saying that I would save £17 a week per family—obviously, I could not save it all, but that is what it costs to prop up the common agricultural policy. I would make massive inroads into saving some of that amount.

We do not need the Common Market. Britain produces 50 to 60 per cent. of its food. We must import a lot because we do not live in a climate in which we can produce all our food. We must export many manufactured goods—rather, we used to—to pay for that food. It is not a bad idea to produce enough food in Britain to reduce the balance of payments deficit on food. I would devise a method to suit us rather than Germany and Italy. They have other fish to fry, which is only natural because they are different countries.

I am not being xenophobic but stating a fact. People should understand that. If everyone in this country acknowledges that Wales is different from England—some of my hon. Friends are Welshmen and proud of it and other people are proud of being Scots, and I do not knock their culture—why, when someone says that Germany is different, are they told that they are being xenophobic? I do not know the difference.

As an immediate move, I would not hesitate to get out of the exchange rate mechanism because it will not last even as long as the grand design on political union or the central bank. Like all the other forms of apparatus for managing currency, it will not last. There was an attempt at a gold standard before the war and economists wrote long articles about how wonderful it was, saying that it would reign for ever. But it did not. Rather, it helped to create mass unemployment in Britain. After the war and the Bretton Woods agreement, there was another attempt. There was then the floating pound, and that did not work either. It is like saying that we are not fit as socialists to run our own country and our own family purse but must give it to the Bundesbank.

I feel strong enough to do it. I do not need to go running to Germany and Italy, where the neo-fascists are now rearing their ugly heads on a grander scale than ever before and where mass unemployment is now the order of the day in many of the eastern European countries, gradually spreading into the other 11 European states within the Common Market. We no longer see massive growth in the Common Market but internecine warfare. We see warring tribes all along the edges of the Common Market. Now that Germany has annexed East Germany, it has run into serious trouble. Religious fundamentalism is now stronger than ever before and my hon. Friend the Member for Workington still goes on about the grand Common Market. These are different days. We are living in a different age and the great days of economic growth are over.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. I should be grateful if the hon. Gentleman would address his remarks to the House rather than to the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours).

Mr. Skinner: I was arguing about the Maastricht agreement, which is mentioned in the Queen's Speech.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I am not arguing about the content, but the hon. Gentleman keeps referring to his hon. Friend and the rest of us would like to join in the debate.

Mr. Skinner: There is such a thing as a debate. It is your first time in the Chair, Mr. Deputy Speaker—or maybe you have been in it before. This place is still a debating chamber and I picked up the remarks of a Conservative Back Bencher, then from another Tory who had made a speech. I picked up some other remarks and my hon. Friend the Member for Workington has made some reasonable remarks in his own way about an important issue and on which he holds certain views. This is a Queen's Speech debate and we have a right to discuss it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I do not challenge the content of the hon. Gentleman's speech, but simply ask him to refer to the whole House so that the rest of us can listen.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: May I take my hon. Friend back to the ERM? He said that it will go in the same way as similar apparatus in history. That may be the policy and strategy. Would there be a need for ERM if we had a single currency?

Mr. Skinner: There will not be a single currency.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: There might be.

Mr. Skinner: It will not happen, because the climate and environment in the Common Market are now different from what they were during the great growth years when the grand designs were made. The Common Market is no longer what it was when those grand ideas were put forward. There is now insecurity all over the place, and when people feel insecure and see unemployment—12 million people are now out of work in the Common Market—and other difficulties, that insecurity results in their being insular. They then start to look closer to home for answers. The great ideas are then pushed on to the back shelf.

Even if the idea was great, unfortunately for my hon. Friend, the climate is totally different now. We shall debate this matter in the future, but I feel pretty confident about what will happen.

While I am dealing with the Common Market, I shall dispose of the subject of proportional representation. I looked at the Queen's Speech carefully and noted that it contained no mention of it. If ever people in this place and in this country have been led up the garden path, it is on the issue of proportional representation.

When the Liberals—who are not present—were challenged about it in the general election, they did not know whether they were on this earth or Fuller's earth. What is proportional representation? In which brand do they believe? They suffered a reduction of about 5 per cent. in their overall vote throughout the country. The people declared their feelings in the general election. I wish that we had received 42 per cent. of the poll, as we should then have been sitting on the Government Benches. I would have relished the opportunity of making some of these comments when in power. I believe in taking power from the bosses, unlike some others.

During the election the Liberals advocated proportional representation on washday Monday, Tuesday and every time they opened their gills. No one can say that we did not have a vote on that issue in the election—we did. The subject did not go unnoticed; people had it rammed down their throats until they were sick of it and, ultimately, more than 80 per cent. voted against it. That is the truth—

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I was not one of them.

Mr. Skinner: There are odd exceptions.

No one can tell me that proportional representation did not get a good run for its money in the general election. It was found flagging. If the general election had been a horse race, proportional representation would still be at Tattenham corner, trying to get round the course when the other horses had finished—it was as far behind as that. Let us hear no more nonsense about that.

One factor that helped us to lose the election was that, near the end of the campaign, some of our people started to follow Paddy Backdown's tail and ran after him and proportional representation. As a result, people gained mistaken ideas about a hung Parliament, and became uneasy and insecure. We should have been positive and spent the last few days of the campaign talking about a real classless society, a subject which is not mentioned in the Queen's Speech.

The Prime Minister is always on about the classless society, so he should put something about it in the Queen's Speech. If he wants a classless society, he should get rid of the House of Lords. We cannot have such a society unless we get rid of the House of Lords and the honours list. It is not enough simply to tamper with them. We must get rid of all the money that is given to those who jump queues in the national health service in order to get a private bed. We must stop giving additional money to allow people to send their kids to posh schools, bailed out by tax relief of one sort or another.

One detestable aspect of the Queen's Speech involves the privatisation of British Coal, not only because it will throw even more people on the scrap heap, but because of the economic cost to the country. We imported 20 million tonnes of coal last year—equivalent to 20 pits and about 20,000 miners. We are talking about an extra £1 billion on the balance of payments. What will the figure be if the pits are privatised and their number reduced by another 20 or 30? That would increase the balance of payments by at least another £2 billion.

We are talking about throwing people out of work. It costs £8,000 every time someone is thrown on the scrap heap of the dole queue—a sum picked up by the taxpayer. The Government, who talk about a classless society, have the cheek to include the subject of the privatisation of the coal industry in the Queen's Speech; and the same is true of rail.

I had the appalling experience the other day of talking to one of my constituents, Eion Watts, who said that he had been to one of the colliery review meetings on the future of Markham Main pit in Yorkshire. British Coal is so arrogant now that the Tories have won the election that it summoned the union representatives from the National Association of Colliery Overmen, Deputies and Shotfirers, the National Union of Mineworkers and the rest and read a statement declaring simply that the Markham Main pit would shut and waved them goodbye.

Do we remember 1984, when, in the middle of the strike, the Tory Government and British Coal promised that there would be a review of all the pits, and proper arguments would be held on their merits or otherwise? On this occasion, the pit workers were kicked out of the door. Privatisation of the coal industry will do the same thing, but on a grander scale.

Mr. Ray Powell (Ogmore): My constituency of Ogmore has been a mining constituency for more than 50 years. Since the Government were elected in 1979, they have closed all seven pits in my constituency and put 7,850 miners on the dole. We have not recovered from that during the past 13 years and, with privatisation, in all probability the last three or four pits left in the whole of Wales will close and thousands more will be put on the dole.

Mr. Skinner: I agree. There were about 14 pits in my constituency when I first became a Member of Parliament and there are now two. My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Wales has been treated as badly as any coalfield in Britain.

The constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Ogmore (Mr. Powell) contains many retired miners and miners' widows, many of whom receive solid fuel allowances or money in lieu. As there are a couple of Ministers present, I shall ask them for a guarantee that, if privatisation takes place—we shall fight it to the very end,

and I hope that there will be no pairing by Labour Members, who should all go through the Lobby to fight that policy day and night—those people who suffered in Wales, Derbyshire and elsewhere will not be stripped of that fuel allowance or the money in lieu.

There is no privatised industry in Britain that will pay out to those people—more than 500,000—who receive fuel allowances. Where will the money come from? Is there a private entrepreneur who will foot the bill? I do not believe that there is. That is an important issue. The Government had better find some answers as there will be an even bigger march to this place if such action takes place.

What happened to the pensions of the miners in Wales who had worked for Wales for 40 or 50 years, and to their widows? What guarantee do they have? There are Maxwell types waiting to get their greedy hands on the £1·4 billion worth of extra money in the miners' pension scheme. Already there have been clever articles in *The Daily Telegraph* and *The Sunday Telegraph* telling advisers and financiers how to get their hands on the money in miners' pension schemes in the event of privatisation. We know what the Tories would do in that event.

The Queen's Speech contained something about shorter hours for Members of Parliament. The Government have a majority of 21. I have a message for one of my hon. Friends who is a stalwart on this issue—no names, no pack drill, but he may be prepared to let me mention him. He is the Labour party deputy chief Whip, my hon. Friend the Member for Jarrow (Mr. Dixon). If we are to fight the Government on all their privatisation policies and other issues, we need to ensure that Labour Members are present in the Chamber to challenge those policies in the early hours of the morning. There must be no talk of wrapping Members in cotton wool and giving them time off.

We have been elected to fight the class enemy. Millions of people were disappointed that they did not gain a Labour Government, and they would be even more disappointed if they thought for one minute that we were not taking on the Government through the long hours to fight them at every possible turn. I propose a battle to the end.

8.37 pm

Mr. Bob Dunn (Dartford): I congratulate you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on your appointment and wish you a long and happy time in the Chair. I guarantee that I shall not cause you trouble, as long as I am called frequently.

I echo some of the sentiments expressed so admirably by the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) in his speech, which I think lasted for the best part of an hour. I have listened to him on many occasions during the 13 years that I have been a Member, and he of all people is a man who has kept true to himself and his beliefs. He has never watered them down or changed them. He has never taken advice from a spin doctor or a public relations agency. Today, we heard a vintage speech—because he expresses what he believes, he believes what he expresses. That is not always true of speeches made in the House.

The hon. Gentleman's references to developments in the European Community also struck a chord among Conservative Members, as did his references to proportional representation, which echoed a sentiment expressed yesterday by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister in his comments on the Gracious Speech.

We have all become accustomed to the refrain that proportional representation would bring stability and fairness to government, but it would not, as has been proved in Italy which is now enjoying its 49th Government since the war. It has not worked either in the Federal Republic of Germany, where the grand coalition of the CDU and the SDP ran affairs for about 15 years. Members on both sides who flirt with proportional representation —some of my own colleagues believe in it—must recognise that PR simply transforms stability of government into instability and transfers responsibility for the shape of Government policy to a small group of extreme parties.

Under any system of PR—the Italian example is the best—which gives parties seats in the Chamber according to their strength outside it, the possibility of the National Front and extreme parties of the left gaining seats is opened up. That would result inevitably in clusters around a core party.

I believe in policies that I do not want to give up, just as the hon. Member for Bolsover has a philosophy that he wants to turn into policies that he would not give up. We have a commonality and an amity of interest in that regard.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: The hon. Gentleman writes off proportional representation as if there were only one system of it, but there are many. The single-member constituency system would not provide for the election of curious and extreme minorities and would be to the advantage of the major parties. The hon. Gentleman grossly misrepresents the impact of greater proportionality of representation.

Mr. Dunn: It is true that there are as many different systems of PR as there are countries that follow it, but the worst system of all is the party list system, under which the hon. Member for Bolsover would not be in the House, as he and I both know. Perhaps that is why he rejects any idea of PR.

Ten years ago I had the pleasure of seconding the motion on the Loyal Address and I am glad that through all the Queen's Speeches since then there has run the thread of pushing out responsibility from the hub to the rim. That theme continues in this Queen's Speech too. I especially welcome the determination to open up even more responsibility to parents and schools. I was an education Minister when the grant-maintained system was made law. There are five schools in my constituency which are now independent of the local education authority. They offer greater dynamism, choice and excellence, and by doing their own thing they meet the needs of the industrial and commercial community in north-west Kent. Parents, governors and teachers whom I have met have all expressed the view that the decision to go grant-maintained was right and proper and in the interests of the schools in question. I hope that as more schools move out of local education authority control the dynamism in education that I have always tried to foster on behalf of my constituents will grow and flourish.

I welcome some of the new appointments to the Government. Perhaps the appointment that gave me greatest pleasure was that of my hon. Friend the Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames), who has been made Minister with responsibility for food. I hope that he will not take it amiss when I say that my initial reaction on hearing of his appointment was to think that the party managers had

[Mr. Dunn]

shown a sense of humour. I am sure, however, that my hon. Friend will overcome his problems of birth and girth and become an extremely able Minister.

I was intrigued by the remarks of the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field), who referred to pensioners who have worked for and paid into pension schemes operated by companies that were plundered in recent years by the late Robert Maxwell. I hope that in the next few weeks and months the House, together with the Government and the Select Committee on Social Security, will deal with the problem facing many of our constituents because of the termination of their pension payments. I am sorry that that was not mentioned in the Queen's Speech, but I do recognise the difficulties that the plundering has caused the Government. I hope that sense will prevail and that my constituents will gain consolation and solace in time from the return of the money taken away from them by Maxwell.

I was pleased by the reference in the Gracious Speech to British Rail. Along with my hon. Friends the Members for Gravesham (Mr. Arnold) and for Maidstone (Miss Widdecombe), I have battled over many years to improve commuter services from our constituencies into central London termini. I welcome the introduction of the new Networker trains on the north-west Kent lines serving Dartford and Gravesham, and the decision to break up British Rail's monopoly by introducing private competition. I do not believe that the proposals go far enough, but I am a firm believer in taking one step at a time, so I hope that eventually there will be more movement towards the greater privatisation of British Rail and towards allowing it to raise on the open market the funds that it needs and deserves.

British Rail's quandary at the moment stems from its being told to behave in a businesslike fashion while being unable to raise money on the open market in the same way as ICI or Sainsbury would. We should unfetter British Rail and give it the capacity to borrow money for capital works. I do not believe in continuing to inject public money into British Rail. It must become a businesslike operation serving commuters who, because of the nature of transport systems in north-west Kent, have to use British Rail. Often there is no real alternative.

I wholly disagree with the idea of a national police force; our party must not embrace it. I represent one of 16 constituencies in Kent, which has a population of 1·5 million. We have special needs, not least those caused by the development of the channel tunnel, which has to be policed, and by the construction of the high-speed link and the associated difficulties. We are in the front line for Europe and for the movement of goods and people. Kent's needs are peculiar to Kent, although Kent's functions are in the national interest. It is nonsensical to set up a national police force advisory body to represent the interests of the public. We need a police force for Kent, answerable to our police authority. I declare an interest in that my wife is a member of the Kent police authority, but even if she were not I would still be against the establishment of a national police force. It might be fine while we were in government, but the Labour party has different values, standards, philosophies and principles and I should be very worried if central political control were extended to a national police force. I therefore record my strong protest against any such proposal. I welcome the Gracious Speech and look forward to the implementation of many of its measures in this parliamentary year.

8.50 pm

Miss Emma Nicholson (Torridge and Devon, West): I add my congratulations to those of other hon. Members on your elevation to the Chair, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I was fortunate enough to serve under your chairmanship in several Committees. Your chairmanship is always marked by wit and firmness and I look forward to your long service in the Chair.

The maiden speeches have been marked by sincerity and commitment to the welfare of constituents. I am sure that all hon. Members respect and honour such virtues. Yesterday and today we heard some stale arguments, attempted resurrections by the Leader of the Opposition of the arguments that lost his party the general election. He had at least some ideas, even though they were conclusively rejected by the electorate. The leader of the Liberal Democrats did not even offer that, but returned to proportional representation and the other failed ideas that always leave the House empty as he rises to speak. That is in contrast to the freshness of style, approach and content of the Prime Minister's response to the Gracious Speech. He leads a reforming Government who promise to create fresh opportunities and return more freedom to citizens of the United Kingdom, their families and communities.

The Prime Minister will build upon the successful and great Conservative reforms of the 1980s. The scorn poured out yesterday by the Leader of the Opposition and directed at Conservatives seemed to flow harmlessly back to him because we have succeeded in our reforms to date. Our great programmes on health, education, social security and privatisation are the keystone, cornerstone and jamb of our democracy, giving power to the people and not to the state. They have been copied by other nations. The blueprint offered to the developing world by the World bank and events in eastern Europe show that our programmes are being copied quickly and successfully in countries such as Poland and Russia.

The poorer former socialist-run economies remind us of a truth that should mark the coming years—that real freedom is economic freedom. Without the freedom to save and purchase as the individual wishes, and without the freedom to inherit and pass on wealth, there is dependency upon and control by others. Under the Labour Government practices which we inherited, that control was classically state acquired and run. We have broken the spell. It could even be said that we have kissed and awakened the sleeping princess of individual energy and creativity of the British people.

Our next step is most important. We must address as a priority the amount that the state spends. We have altered the balance of tax raising and the European Community VAT model is now ours. But the percentage that the state spends must now be the determinant, the marker, for our Conservative commitment. Let us aim to reduce that 43 per cent. of gross domestic product to at least 40 per cent. That would bring us closer to the average ratio of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, not well above it as happened in most post-war years.

We must urge the Government to look at the big spenders. Some 22 million of our citizens receive social security benefits. We must look at the environment, about which my hon. Friends have spoken so ably and with much knowledge. The welfare state must be the servant and not the master of the public purse. We have not yet reached our goal. The 13 years of Conservative government have increased in percentage terms the income taken by the Government in taxes from those on average earnings. We pay too much tax. We have altered the balance, but we have not grasped the nettle of reducing the percentage. The extension of the 20p tax band to the first £2,000 of earnings is wonderful news to Conservative Back Benchers. It is real Tory news announced yesterday by the Prime Minister himself.

Where have we failed? What must be our next step? We must rigorously question the redistributive theory. Why should services throughout the United Kingdom be created to the same national level? That is the "Big Mac" philosophy, without the quality controls. We must question, challenge and overthrow the assumption that the state will provide from the beginning to the end of life. The great users of public services and public funding are in the middle income group, and expenditure on those services is not expenditure for the poor. We must reassess our priorities because surely the middle income group now have sufficient wealth, created under Tory Governments, to pay at least a part of their way. Only when that happens will the really poor benefit in the way that they truly need.

Those imperative assumptions will take years to change, despite the fact that they have been rocked in countries as far apart in culture and income as Sweden and Zambia. We must move from non-judgmentality to impartial but rigorous assessment of need, and match that need with underpinning that will lead to help for success. We must grasp the nettle of universal benefits. We must reform housing. Why should we have state ownership at all? Some 20 per cent. of housing is still state owned. Why not zero per cent? In recent years, it has been socialist thinking that an Englishman's home is the castle of the state.

We must reform the police. More money has not meant, at least not yet, a reduction in crime. We must also reform local government. We started that under the John Banham commission. We must look again at pensions and cut subsidies. We must forget the socialist gravy train, because it ran into the buffers of the International Monetary Fund. The agencies represent wonderful thinking that we must carry further and we should look firmly at the creation of a body based on the Audit Commission. What about a real British Fontainebleau, matching our excellence in the civil service by sharing with industry knowledge at a much earlier training and learning age? If the excellence and flexibility of top civil service thinking are matched by the citizens charter corrupts throughout, we shall have a model of a modern Major Government—slimline and effective government service to the electorate.

The open government reform is most welcome because knowledge is power and that power should rest with the citizen. We must not be short-sighted in our determination to succeed in shrinking the mushroom cloud of public expenditure. We must invest in areas where government must provide services. We should have statutory education from the age of four and should reassess our commitment to nursery schooling. That would help women.

There should be an equal opportunities employment commission that offers equal opportunities not only to women but to that great and undervalued section of the population, the disabled and to ethnic minorities. That commission could focus on employment, because equality of opportunity issues are best coped with by the relevant Departments. One of the keynote practice employers in equal opportunity is the civil service. Sir Peter Kemp of the Cabinet Office and his colleague, Susan Haird, the equal opportunities officer, are carrying out wonderful and careful work which industry would do well to follow.

The Government must spend, or continue to get others to do so, on infrastructure such as roads and sewerage. The privatisation of the coal industry and the beginning of the nibbling away at the privatisation of the railways are welcome music to Conservative ears. I believe that we should shed everything that it is not strictly necessary for the Government to run. The determinant of what ownership will give the best results for all our citizens should be competition, not ownership. Competition, in a variety of ways, offers the best services. Ownership is of less importance.

The great place on which the Government must spend is the national health service, in which we have trusts and management choice. All sorts of good things flow from the NHS, and I am confident that our 90:10 per cent. ratio in health provision is good. It has resulted in first-class management, and that is where our reforms are starting to bear fruit.

The electorate declared conclusively last month that socialism and its weaker sibling, the Liberal Democrats, are finished. The Conservatives are the reformers now. We are a Government who are truly worthy of the nation. We shall all enjoy a happier and a more tolerant, prosperous, generous and efficient five years under the leadership of our great Prime Minister.

8.59 pm

Mr. Michael Meacher (Oldham, West): First, Mr. Deputy Speaker Morris, I congratulate you on achieving your post. I add my congratulations through you to Madam Speaker on achieving her prestigious position and on the overwhelming majority with which she won it. We look forward to you and her regulating our affairs in the House with good-humoured forcefulness when it is even more packed than it is now.

I take the opportunity to compliment several of my hon. Friends on what I am sure the House will agree was a series of remarkable maiden speeches. One of the benefits of an election, even when one's party loses it, is the inflow of new talent. My hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, East (Mrs. Prentice) made a forthright speech in which she extolled especially the need for better training. We look forward to further speeches from her in which she harasses the Government on what is unquestionably a major deficiency in their policy.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Mrs. Roche) spoke of her special concern on a range of constituency issues, including environmental matters. She directed her attention also to Cyprus and the Law Commission. I do not forget her recommendation that the tradition of legal wigs should be dropped. I can assure her that the list of anachronisms does not end there.

In a debate on public expenditure, my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Leith (Mr. Chisholm) made a

[Mr. Michael Meacher]

passionate speech on the issues that concern his constituents and, indeed, the entire country. These included decentralisation of power, unemployment, housing, hospitals and child care. As those issues embrace much of today's debate, my hon. Friend is clearly a natural. With your permission, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am sure that he will be a frequent contributor to our debates.

My hon. Friend the Member for York (Mr. Bayley) made an eloquent speech about the special constituency interests of the beautiful city of York, where I had the great pleasure of living for several years, and about his deeply felt concerns in respect of community care and the care of the elderly in residential homes. He raised issues forcefully on behalf of many who often do not have a public voice. We look forward to his strongly keeping such issues before the House.

My hon. Friend the Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Smith), in the spirit of his great predecessor, Michael Foot, made a passionate plea on the great issues that have always been at the centre of socialist struggle: low pay, bad housing, the health service and privatisation. I do not know what it is about south Wales, but it seems always to produce great champions of the people. We clearly heard another one in the making this evening.

It is to be noted that the non-controversial principle of maiden speeches that ruled firmly when I entered the House seems to have gone for good. I can say only that the pleasure that we derived from the speeches to which I have referred was all the greater for that.

It is customary on these occasions, when the Minister is newly appointed, to offer congratulations. That is a formality which I am happy to follow. However, if the reputation of the Secretary of State for Social Security is any sign of his future performance, we can certainly assure him of a hard pounding. One likes to think that, as was said earlier today, the Prime Minister has a sense of humour in some of his appointments. On this occasion, I fear that the joke may be at the expense of the unemployed.

The Prime Minister likes to claim that he has some affinity with the unemployed because, for a brief period, he was one of them. The truth is that nobody who had any concern about the unemployed would have appointed the right hon. Gentleman as Secretary of State for Social Security—*[Interruption.]* I hope that I am wrong. I shall be willing to apologise to the House in due course if the record shows that. However, everything that we know about the right hon. Gentleman leads us to view his tenure of office with considerable apprehension—not on our behalf, but on behalf of those for whom we speak.

Before I come to the contents of the Queen's Speech, I wish to refer to what is not in it. There is a glaring omission, to which my hon. Friend the Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) drew attention, and which was then taken up by a number of Conservative Members, including the hon. Member for Wellingborough (Mr. Fry). There is no mention of establishing a proper pension fund framework, which is now urgently required not only to prevent any repetition of the Maxwell saga, but to deal with a series of dubious manoeuvres that have occurred in several other cases, not least treating pension funds as the trigger for takeover targets.

On an even more urgent matter, there is no mention in the Queen's Speech of what the Government intend to do in support of thousands of Maxwell pensioners who, through no fault of their own, and to a large degree due to the Government's negligence, now face being deprived of their basic livelihood—*[Interruption.]* I shall come to the reasons for saying that in a moment. Does the right hon. Gentleman accept—it is obvious to most people—that the banks recklessly encouraged Maxwell in his orgy of borrowing and takeovers? If so, will he repudiate the statement a few days ago by the Governor of the Bank of England and put pressure on the banks to return the pension fund assets that they now know to be stolen, as is the law with other property known to be stolen?

If there is still a shortfall—there may be one of £200 million to £300 million—will the right hon. Gentleman meet that out of the Exchequer? I should be very happy to give way to him if he wishes to answer that question now. I certainly want an answer tonight. If he chooses not to reply at this moment, I give him notice that I shall intervene in his speech, because we want an answer to that question tonight. It is an urgent matter which demands an answer from the Secretary of State, and only he can give it.

I ask that question because the Government are liable to meet any shortfall. The Secretary of State's predecessor was culpably negligent in failing, for 22 months after the Social Security Act 1990 received Royal Assent in July of that year, to bring forward two regulations—one on the 5 per cent. ceiling on self-investment and the other making the pension fund a debt to the employer in the event of a winding up. Those two regulations would have made the Maxwell depredations very difficult, if not impossible.

I ask again: will the Government pay for their own negligence? If it is of any assistance to the right hon. Gentleman, and in case he is tempted to say that the Government cannot afford to do that at a time of public expenditure restraint, I shall put two considerations to him. One is that the Government saw fit to compensate the Barlow Clowes losers who openly speculated on offshore profits. In that case, how could the Government not compensate those who believed, in good faith, that they were putting their money into the most secure possible investment for their retirement?

Secondly, if the Government can afford £6 billion to bribe younger people to opt out into personal pensions, and if they can afford nearly a further £1 billion during the next five years to bribe older people to take out personal pensions—the Queen's Speech, which is generally devoid of detail, goes out of its way to re-emphasise that detail, which we knew already—the Government certainly can afford to protect the Maxwell pensioners.

Therefore, I ask for the third time whether the Government will deal with the chaos of trustee law regarding pension funds, and compensate the Maxwell pensioners. Will the Secretary of State answer that question now, because the House needs an answer to it? The Secretary of State clearly does not intend to answer the question now. I repeat that we shall not leave the Chamber until we have some answer to that question tonight.

Mr. Skinner: We might be here all weekend.

Mr. Meacher: I cannot make the Secretary of State answer the question, but I can repeatedly intervene and demand an explanation. If he is on his feet, he has to give some answer, so we shall wait to see what happens.

The Queen's Speech is more opaque than usual when it comes to the social security paragraph, but the Government never announce the big changes in social security in the Queen's Speech, particularly when they are bad news. They did not announce, either in the manifesto or in the Queen's Speech, the ending of the pension link with earnings in 1980, which, according to the Government's figures, has cumulatively robbed pensioners of more than £35 billion. Nor did they announce beforehand the child benefit freeze, which, between 1987 and 1990, cost mothers and children more than £1 billion.

But the drift of the Queen's Speech is perfectly clear. The most ominous phrase in the Queen's Speech says it all. It says that it is the Government's intention to

"reduce the share of national income taken by the public sector".

Clearly, the Department of Social Security, with a bigger budget than any other single Department, is to have its budget cut sharply. That is why a right-wing Thatcherite Minister has been appointed Chief Secretary and why a right-wing Thatcherite Minister has been put in charge of social security.

The cycle is perfectly clear. The Government so mismanaged the economy with an inflationary credit boom in the mid-1980s that they were forced to jack up interest rates to trigger a recession, and now that that savage disinflation has produced a PSBR of at least £28 billion, they are determined to offload most of the hardship on to the most helpless and vulnerable sections of the population whom they hope and believe cannot or will not retaliate—the pensioners, the unemployed, the sick and disabled, the lone parents and the low paid.

Mr. Ian Taylor: The hon. Gentleman talks about those most in difficulty. Given the targeting that he was implying in his comments, does he support a shift towards selective benefits and away from universal benefits?

Mr. Meacher: There was considerable debate earlier on that issue. Unlike many people who use the words, when I tell the hon. Gentleman that I shall be coming to that point later in my speech, I mean it.

That is the strategy which is contained in the phrase in the Queen's Speech.

"with sustained emphasis on those groups with the greatest need."

Decoded—we have had plenty of experience of this—it means more means testing, more rationing, more cuts for the 22 million people in Britain dependent on benefit. It means more chipping away at benefits for the poor on low incomes in order to give tiny increases to the poorest on the lowest incomes of all. That is the bitter experience that we have had during the past 13 years.

Yes, the Government believe in redistribution, but never from the rich to the poor, only from the poor to the utterly destitute. I have three fundamental objections to the Government strategy of targeting, which is Toryspeak for means testing, and clearly is about to be considerably expanded.

The first of my objections—and I readily admit that this is the least effective of them, because the Government have as much compassion as a jar of vinegar—is that targeting is manifestly unjust. Last month, the Institute of Fiscal Studies reported that, since 1979, tax and benefit changes have given an average of an extra £87 a week to the richest 10 per cent. in our society, while the poorest 10 per cent. were forced to take a loss of £1.

How can it be right now to kick the poorest 10 per cent. in the teeth again? The Government have already produced the most unequal society since the Edwardian era. On the one hand, there are the 1 per cent. of the population who are the richest—and they total more than half a million people, so we are not talking small numbers. According to the Government's own figures, they have seen their incomes increase by no less than £877 per week since 1979. That is not the result of pay rises or of perks—although they have massively increased, too—but of cumulative tax cuts over 13 years.

On the other hand, there are the pensioners—3 million of whom are forced to make do on only £54 a week. That became by far the lowest pension in the EC, except for Greece and Portugal, after the Government removed the pension link with earnings. Also, 2·75 million unemployed are reduced to living on £43 per week per adult. That is also by far the lowest unemployment benefit in the EC, after the Government made 11 separate additional cuts in unemployment benefit since 1979.

More than 1 million young people aged 16 to 17 are denied entitlement to any benefit if they cannot get a job, obtain training or enter further education, through no fault of their own. That is unlike any other country in the EC. The Government have forced young people into debt and into criminal activity in order to survive. The National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux reports continually reveal continuing destitution and starvation at levels that we have not seen for decades.

Worse still are the 10 million people living on or below income support—which is only £42 a week for an adult. Eight years ago, silently and without any announcement, the Government broke the link between earnings and that final safety net benefit. Those are the people whom the right hon. Gentleman will be hitting if he cuts social security benefits further.

If the Secretary of State denies that he will do that—I want an answer to this question, too—will he give the House a categorical assurance tonight that there will be no change in the next five years in the status of the retirement pension or of child benefit, as universal benefits available to all without a means test? I will gladly give way if the Secretary of State will come to the Dispatch Box. All he has to do is say that there will be no change—just utter the single word "No". We are entitled to an answer. What are the Government's plans? What do they intend to do?

The Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. Peter Lilley): I shall answer.

Mr. Meacher: The right hon. Gentleman says that he will answer. We shall seek to ensure that he does. If he will not give that assurance, and if he will not deny that he is planning to cut social security benefits further, I have three questions for him.

Mr. Lilley: Of course we will stick to the pledges contained in our manifesto—unlike the Labour party, whose heir presumptive seems determined to open up the very issues on which the hon. Gentleman wants an assurance from the Government: an assurance that we will not review the position. Will the hon. Gentleman give the House an assurance that he will not serve under the right

[Mr. Lilley]

hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) if he asks his social security spokesman to review whether child benefit and the retirement pension should be means tested?

Mr. Meacher: It is the right hon. Gentleman's party which has just won a general election. Although it may surprise the Conservatives, they are still the Government, and the people of this country—10 million pensioners and 12 million families receiving child benefit; that is 22 million people altogether—want an answer to my question. Will the Government maintain the retirement pension and child benefit as universal benefits? The right hon. Gentleman still has not answered that question.

As the right hon. Gentleman will not give the assurance that I seek, let me ask him three questions. First, how can it be right for someone like him, on £1,212 a week, to decree that £43 a week is too much for an unemployed person to receive? How can he say that that amount should be cut, when he has no experience whatever of what it is like to have to get through a week on £43, which must cover all expenses except housing?

Secondly, how can the right hon. Gentleman persist in a policy of extending means testing, when the latest evidence confirms yet again what Opposition Members have always said? We have constantly pointed out how self-defeating, and what poor value for money, that policy is. The Oxford-Oldham study, published last week, shows yet again that, despite the spending of millions of pounds on expensive advertising promotions by the former Secretary of State for Social Security—who has just entered the Chamber, right on cue—family credit still reaches only 50 per cent. of those for whom it is intended, while child benefit reaches 100 per cent. of its intended targets.

My third question is, in many ways, the most important. What right has the Secretary of State to make further cuts in national insurance benefits? They are not charity; they are not donations. They are rights that have been paid for. The Government have already increased national insurance contributions by 38 per cent. since 1979. If any private insurance company made such swingeing increases in premiums and then cut benefits that had already been paid for, it would be taken to court and convicted of breaking its contract. If the Government believe in the rule of law, they should be subject to the same rules.

My second fundamental objection to the Government's social security strategy, as revealed—somewhat opaquely—in the Queen's Speech, is that it flies in the face of everything that the Prime Minister said yesterday. He said that he wanted to build a society in which choice and freedom existed, and in which there were no barriers. Let me repeat his words, which were quite striking. In that society, he said, people would be able

"not only to get their feet on to one rung, but to scale the whole height of the ladder".—[*Official Report*, 6 May 1992; Vol. 207, c. 73.]

How does the Prime Minister expect people on benefit—who, after all, constitute a third of the nation—to get their feet on the ladder at all, when he has crippled those feet?

Unemployment is still rising by an average of 30,000 a month, and the Government are cutting training budgets by £300 million. How, in such circumstances, can people on benefit get into the labour market to better themselves? How can people on £30, £40 or £50 a week find the wherewithal to launch themselves? The unemployed have been targeted, not for choice and opportunity but for bearing the costs of the Government's economic mismanagement. If unemployment is a "price worth paying", the unemployed form a class worth dispensing with.

Pensioners, too, are trapped in poverty, because the Government have broken the link between pensions and earnings. That has cut £17 a week from the income of a single pensioner and £28 a week from the income of a married couple. Lone parents are trapped into dependence by a lack of child care facilities, even though most of them would much prefer to earn in order to support themselves and their children.

All those people—more than one third of our nation—have no alternative to social security at this time, yet the Government intend to kick them when they are down. Those people form the excluded Britain. Conservative Members make no mention of them in their rhetorical speeches in this debate. They are the disappearing ones to whom the Government turn a blind eye until they grate by sleeping in shop doorways or on the steps of the opera. They formed the gap in the Prime Minister's opening speech yesterday. They are the people whom the classless society will never touch and was never intended to touch. Their enforced losses and deprivation over the past 13 years are financing the opportunity and incentives for those who are able to climb the ladder. For them, the Prime Minister's citizens charter is a sick joke.

Mr. Tim Smith: Can we take it from what the hon. Gentleman has said that not only is he not in favour of any extension of selective benefits but that he would prefer to see them reduced and have a system of more universal benefits? Is that right?

Mr. Meacher: I believe that universal benefits are the only way of ensuring that the poorest in our society receive the benefits that Parliament has intended that they should receive. The retirement pension is the only thing available to 2 million or 3 million of the poorest pensioners, and child benefit is of key importance not just to the poorest families but to those on middle incomes. Child benefit is without any poverty trap, because it is not means tested. It is essential that those benefits should be preserved and that is my immediate requirement. That is why I asked the Secretary of State whether the Government intend to keep them. He did not answer that question and he still has not done so.

Mr. Lilley: We have not had an answer from the hon. Gentleman. Will he serve under a leader whose manifesto for the leadership election says that he wants to carry out a review of all universal benefits to see whether they should be means tested?

Mr. Meacher: Can we be clear about this? I am glad that the Chief Secretary is with us. I take it that there has been some discussion between the Secretary of State and the Chief Secretary. Is the Secretary of State confirming that the basic retirement pension, open to all at the age of retirement, and child benefit will be preserved as universal benefits over the next five years?

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Social Security (Miss Ann Widdecombe): It is in the manifesto.

Mr. Meacher: I am glad that we have that assurance from the Under Secretary. I hope that the grimace on the face of the Chief Secretary is not a sign of pain. That is an important achievement in this debate.

Mr. Ian Taylor *rose——*

Mr. Meacher: I want to make progress. *[Interruption.]* We are here to discuss the Queen's Speech and the Government's intentions. People are interested in those who have just won the election and their intentions over the next five years. At this time, and probably for the next two or three years, that is exclusively what matters to the people of this country. That is why we are sticking to that issue, and will continue to do so.

My third fundamental objection to the Government's social security strategy set out in the Queen's Speech is one which the Secretary of State, however hard-nosed he may be on compassion or inequality——

Mr. Lilley: The hon. Gentleman has asked me questions and I have answered them all in full. He owes it to the House to answer the question whether he would take part in a review of the universal benefits which his right hon. and learned Friend believes should at least be considered for means testing.

I shall see that the pledges in our manifesto are implemented. Will the hon. Gentleman remind the House that, when he was in government he participated in a breach of Labour's pledges to pensioners, both over the Christmas bonus and over the link with earnings?

Mr. Meacher: Certainly, I gladly recall for the House that on two occasions the Labour Government did not pay the Christmas bonus—that is a matter of historical record. However, the result of that was that pensioners lost £20 altogether. By comparison, they gained 20 per cent. in real terms during the last five-year period of Labour government. Over the past 13 years of Tory government, pensioners have gained fractionally over zero per cent., because there has been no real gain for pensioners—at least for the poorest pensioners, who do not have other income, and that is what really matters. That is the difference between the parties. There was a 20 per cent. gain over five years of Labour government and virtually nothing over 13 years of Tory government. *[Interruption.]*

My third point is something about which the Secretary of State should be concerned—*[Interruption.]* Let me finish this point. If the Government persist with their policies for another five years—and, indeed, tighten the screw further—I say advisedly that there is a real risk of a social explosion.

In America in the 1980s, there was the same Government-driven generation of inequality as there has been here, both at the top and at the bottom. For the first time, we now have about 2·5 million people living in families forced below the safety net of income support by social fund loan repayments, poll tax arrears, electricity and gas repayments, rent arrears and so on. Three quarters of the people who are desperate for last-resort assistance from the social fund are now turned away. Not only are there beggars on the streets, but children are inadequately clothed and fed, and our housing is crumbling. More than 20 per cent. of homes are now officially unfit for human habitation.

The relative deprivation that pervades this country is not so very different from that in south central Los Angeles. The explosion there provoked lawlessness, but its causes were poverty and injustice. The same tinderbox ingredients are increasingly present in Britain for anyone with eyes to see.

I am talking about the people with no voice, no hope, and often no votes—more than a million of them have fallen off the electoral rolls as a result of the poll tax. I warn the Government that, if they are provoked further, the underclass—call it what you will—will have no other means to make their presence felt except by insurrection in the streets. I desperately hope that that does not happen, but we are not the Government and we want to ensure that the Government do not deliberately provoke an explosion. Many of us believe that they may.

In its own research studies, the Home Office recognises that the rocketing crime rate is linked to poverty and recession. A few months ago, Robert Reiner, professor of criminology at the London School of Economics, concluded an in-depth study with the following words:

"The bottom line is that, if we separate out long-term trends and more recent sudden changes, the rate of increase really does relate to increased poverty and inequality, and to sharp declines in consumption levels amongst the worst off."

The Secretary of State is playing with fire by pushing inequality at the bottom still further. The clashes in Trafalgar square two years ago and the five nights of disorder on the Meadow Well estate in Newcastle last summer were a warning. I believe that that warning should be heeded.

I draw attention to the news today that President Bush has concluded that the main lesson from the Los Angeles riots is that there must be a huge and continuing Government programme to lift the victims of society out of poverty—one which must be sustained so that they do not fall back into poverty. That is clearly desperately needed in America today. Even in the absence of immediate riots, such a programme is desperately needed here too. That is one major reason why we find the Queen's Speech so lacking in judgment and in wisdom.

9.35 pm

The Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. Peter Lilley): I join everyone in welcoming you, Madam Speaker, to your high office and in adding my congratulations to you on achieving it. I also add my congratulations to the chorus of maiden speakers we have heard today, if that is the correct collective word for maiden speakers. All were of an extremely high standard, as the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) has just remarked.

I took a particular interest in the contribution by the hon. Member for Lewisham, East (Mrs. Prentice) who paid an especially kind tribute to her energetic predecessor. She represents an area in which my family had its roots. Although she represents it with great lucidity, she does so in accents that I do not recall from my youth. She mentioned the particular problem of the Rathbone Society in her area. I have made rapid investigations and I have discovered that it suffered from unresolved organisational problems which caused it finally to close on 24 April. All those being trained by it are being found other places by the South Thames training and enterprise council.

I was also interested in the excellent contribution by the hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Mrs. Roche). She paid a welcome tribute to Hugh Rossi, who was one of the outstanding Members of Parliament and a

[Mr. Peter Lilley]

former Minister in my Department. My wife comes from the area and she was originally a councillor there, so I will keep a beady eye on proceedings.

I unfortunately missed the speech of the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Leith (Mr. Chisholm), but I gather that he made an impressive contribution and argued that child care should be his top priority. I shall read his speech with interest.

The hon. Member for York (Mr. Bayley) rightly paid tribute to Conal Gregory, a friend to many of us here. I agree with him about the importance of getting right the changes in the arrangements for community care as they are made.

I am sure that all hon. Members will join the hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Smith) in his tribute to his predecessor. Michael Foot was one of the great orators and wits whom the House has known. I was glad that his successor had a fluent and confident style. I am sure that all those hon. Members will make important contributions in the House again. We look forward to hearing from them in future and we miss their predecessors.

The hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) appears, as my hon. Friend the Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith) said, to have learnt nothing from defeat. She defended, in an astoundingly lengthy contribution, the record of the 1974-79 Labour Government. One felt for a moment that she was not so much a part of a dream ticket as of a nostalgia ticket—nostalgic for a nightmare at that.

The most important and significant Opposition contribution came from the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field). He was thoughtful, creative, compassionate and reasonable. The thought passed through my mind, "Thank heavens he is not standing for the leadership of the Labour party." I am not convinced that his proposals on taxation are necessarily viable or workable, but I am certain that they present our party with a greater electoral threat than anything that the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) has been or would be able to devise ahead of a future election.

The hon. Member for Birkenhead is undoubtedly right to point out that targeting, if achieved by steep rates of benefit withdrawal, can give rise to serious disincentive effects. I shall certainly look at the specific examples that he gave and see whether there are lessons to be learnt.

On the Maxwell issue, the hon. Member for Birkenhead will know that the Government will respond to his Committee's report in due course. On the specific proposal that the hon. Gentleman put today, I am afraid that it would be far more open ended than it appears and, I am sure, than he intends. But I can assure him that we are keeping in close contact with the trustees, actuaries and managers of all the pension funds concerned. Action is being taken energetically to try to resolve the ownership of assets and return them to the funds. If, in the meantime, anyone is not receiving his or her pension, they are of course entitled to the guaranteed minimum equivalent to their SERPS entitlement. If they need support from the benefits system because of uncertainty as to their income or future income, we have alerted the social security offices to make sure that, if necessary, emergency provisions are put into effect to make sure that they receive that help. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will recognise that we are trying to respond as positively as we can to the very serious problems that are raised by that issue.

Mr. Frank Field: Have any of the funds that fear that they may not have the assets to continue to pay pensions approached the Government, asking them to underwrite their commitments in the way that I suggested, or have no approaches been made at all?

Mr. Lilley: I do not think that anyone has made the specific proposal that the hon. Gentleman has suggested to us. Obviously, in the first instance, the trustees are seeking the return of those funds. One hopes that that will be achieved as rapidly as such a complex matter can be achieved.

Mr. Meacher *rose*——

Mr. Lilley: I am about to refer to the fascinating list of questions of the hon. Member for Oldham, West, if I may. Indeed, I shall come straight to them if that will help him to contain himself. He said that there was no mention in the Queen's Speech of a new framework for pensions. I have just said to the hon. Member for Birkenhead that we will be responding to the Select Committee's report on the subject. Of course, we are committed in the manifesto to a full review of pension law and the framework of pension law. The hon. Gentleman wanted the banks to restore stolen property. Of course, every effort is being made to identify and return it, and it is right that that should be the case.

The hon. Member for Oldham, West asked whether the Exchequer would give an open-ended guarantee to meet any shortfall. He recognises in advance that that cannot be the case. He argued that the Department had brought about the situation by failing to bring in two items of legislation which, in his view, would have made it impossible for the late Mr. Maxwell to carry out his wrongdoing. There is absolutely no reason to suppose that those pieces of legislation would have had that effect. They were, of course, delayed because of the serious, costly implications that there could have been of the Barber judgment interacting with them, and there is absolutely no evidence that had they been introduced already they would have prevented what has happened.

The hon. Gentleman knows, too, that the Barlow Clowes situation is not and was said at the time not to be a precedent. He knows, I should have thought, that when he says that £6 billion has been used in what he describes as a bribe to persuade people to take up private pensions, he has simply got the wrong figure by a large factor. He is including the contribution that individuals would otherwise have had to make to SERPS, which instead goes to the private pension schemes. Those private pension schemes being funded means that there is a flow of committed long-term savings available for long-term investment in industry. That must be something which surely all of us who believe in investment wish to encourage.

Lastly, the hon. Gentleman repeated his question, "Do the Government intend to deal with trustee law?" Obviously I shall not give details at this stage, but the review will cover the whole framework of pension law.

So the hon. Gentleman's remarks on those fronts did not carry us much further than in the previous Parliament. Nor did they on several of the other matters that he raised.

Mr. Meacher: The Secretary of State will not be surprised to know that I am far from satisfied with his answers. First, I asked whether he would press the banks to return the assets in the way that the Governor of the Bank of England has said that they should not. Does the Secretary of State believe that they should? We do. Does he?

Secondly, the Secretary of State does not seem to have answered the question about underwriting the continued payment. He said that no approach had been made. If an approach were made, would he support it? Thirdly, if there were a shortfall even after the banks returned the assets, would the Government meet it and provide compensation as they did in the case of Barlow Clowes?

Mr. Lilley: The hon. Gentleman seems to wish me to answer his questions three times even though he has refused to answer my questions. I repeat the answers. Of course, there is no question but that assets identified as belonging to the funds must be restored. I made it clear to the hon. Member for Birkenhead that his proposal was unfortunately much more open ended than it appeared at first sight and, therefore, we could not endorse it. If the hon. Member for Oldham, West failed to catch that, I am sorry about it.

Perhaps I may now return to the mainstream of my remarks. I must begin by thanking the hon. Member for Oldham, West for his kind, if somewhat mixed, words welcoming me to the job. Many of those who have welcomed me to the job have recognised that it is not entirely a bed of roses. Someone pointed out that when I was Financial Secretary to the Treasury it was my responsibility to relieve taxpayers of about £70,000 million a year through a complex and incomprehensible system of interlocking taxes. Now I am responsible for handing out £70,000 million a year through a complex and incomprehensible system of benefits. I think that it was my predecessor who said that the only difference was that one was far more unpopular giving it out than taking it away.

It is a particular challenge to follow my predecessor, who is unrivalled in his knowledge of the system and his manifest dedication to the beneficiaries. The hon. Member for Oldham, West is a great luminary on these subjects. He has detailed knowledge of the benefits system and I recognise his personal commitment to all those who are in need.

The only occasion that I recall on which the hon. Gentleman and I have previously debated was at a meeting in my constituency which he might recall. It was called by his union, the Confederation of Health Service Employees. I was foolish enough to accept the invitation. I fully realised that the entire audience would be on the hon. Gentleman's side. But the union took the additional and somewhat unnecessary precaution of inviting seven platform speakers to support him. I had none. I was getting a pretty good drubbing, but I took comfort in the remark of Einstein, whose theory of relativity was denounced by 100 German professors. He replied:

"If I were wrong it would take only one professor to prove it."

Mr. Meacher: But they did not support the right hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Lilley: At the election we found a great many people to support me and remarkably few to support Opposition Members.

I have always admired the hon. Gentleman's debating style. He is never knowingly understated. He is not afraid to exaggerate a little. He might even be described as the Dame Edna Everage of the Opposition Front Bench. He deserves praise from this side of the House for other reasons, too. He is the unsung hero of the Tory election victory. After all, it was the hon. Member for Oldham, West who committed Labour to the initial pledges which forced the shadow Chancellor to spell out how he would raise taxes—a commitment damaging in itself but rendered incredible by the additional pledges that the hon. Gentleman crammed into his party's manifesto. We calculated that the hon. Gentleman's pledges alone totalled £13 billion or more—over a third of Labour's total promises. No one could match him, no one could stop him and no one could believe him. Never in the field of public expenditure has so much been promised to so many at the expense of so few.

Now the hon. Gentleman is playing a key part in the subsequent election—for the leadership of the Labour party. On 28 April, *The Guardian* reported:

"Already left wingers such as Michael Meacher and Robin Cook are arguing that the party's historic support for universal benefits, such as child benefit and pensions, must be reconsidered in favour of targeting."

That gave the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East the impression that the coast was clear to his left. So he promised in his leadership manifesto to

"examine in an open-minded way the balance between universal and selective benefits."

He said:

"There may be a case for many of them remaining universal, but it's only right . . . to re-examine everything. I have not ruled anything out of court."

Unfortunately, that crossed in the post with a letter to *The Guardian* from the outraged hon. Member for Oldham, West repudiating the very idea of a move in favour of targeting. The leter said:

"I have never said or implied . . . any such idea".

So the brothers are in a real mess. The heir presumptive is at loggerheads with the spokesman incumbent. We want to know whether the spokesman incumbent will remain so when the heir presumptive wins the election.

Mr. Meacher: The Minister has made the point that I was going to make. After 20 minutes of his speech he has not yet reached the Queen's Speech, but I wanted to ensure that he understands that the report in *The Guardian* had no foundation whatsoever. He has now quoted it to make a long and cumbersome point about the internal discussion within the Labour party.

Mr. Lilley: On the subject of being long and cumbersome, the hon. Gentleman took six minutes of my speech and has just reattributed them to me retrospectively. Therefore, if I cannot deal with all the points as I wish, it is his fault. I never expected to be outflanked to the right by the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East. I can only assume that he covets my "Spitting Image"—uniform, monocle, jackboots and leather gloves. And he is welcome to them.

The Labour party spent the last four years claiming that we had laid the social security system to waste and that we did not care. The electorate did not believe it because its rhetoric was manifestly at odds with the facts. We have increased spending by over half in real terms since we came to office. It is absurd to say that a party that spends

[Mr. Lilley]

£70,000 million on social security does not care about those who need it. That is over £10 from every working person every working day being spent on social security.

Ms. Armstrong: What are the future trends of Government policy? Will the Minister recognise the point made by the hon. Member for Waveney (Mr. Porter) that 16 and 17-year-olds are not finding places on youth training schemes because places are not available? The hon. Gentleman said that there were problems with that and that benefit was still not being paid.

Mr. Lilley: Opposition Members keep asking me to get on with my speech and then taking time out of it.

We have an excellent record on social security, not least on the disabled. We have increased real spending on long-term sick and disabled people by 150 per cent. We have increased the number receiving attendance allowance fourfold, to nearly 1 million. We have increased the number receiving mobility allowance sevenfold to nearly 660,000.

We are adding further help from two new benefits this April—disability living allowance and disability working allowance—which will bring help to around 300,000 disabled people, at a cost of an additional £300 million in 1993-94.

We were the first to give proper recognition to the role of carers. We have increased the numbers on invalid care allowance from 5,000 to 155,000 and we introduced the special carer's premium in income support.

For pensioners, too, we have a good story to tell. Pensioners' real average incomes have risen by 34 per cent. since we came to office. That is faster than the incomes of those below retirement age and five times faster than under Labour. Pensioners have benefited from the growth of private pensions, the positive yield on savings, the development of the state earnings-related pension scheme and the abolition of the hated earnings rule.

We have also targeted extra help on the least well off. Last month we increased pensioner premiums for the over-80s and disabled pensioners by more than inflation. From October 1992, there will be further increases in all the pensioner premiums: £2 per week for a single person; £3 for a couple. We will have given £700 million extra since 1989 to poorer pensioners over and above the normal benefit upratings. That proves that one can target without introducing a means test into the basic retirement pension —a point which the hon. Member for Oldham, West may have to make to the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East.

The election revealed how fundamentally different the approaches of the Government and the Opposition are to social security. Labour believes that the problem is inadequate funding, which can be made good by a once-for-all increase in spending. We recognise that demands on social security are rising inexorably. There will be more elderly people, there will be more frail people and people's expectations will continue to rise. A once-for-all increase will not cope with that.

We need a continually growing economy to fund those demands, which means a low-tax, lightly regulated, enterprise economy. Moreover, many needs are better met directly by long-term economic growth than by reliance on the benefit system, however generous. Sound economic policies feed through to private pensions through higher dividends, to generate jobs, to permit a wide range of self-provision and to protect savings. I am convinced that the policies that we are pursuing will ensure that Britain is one of the first countries out of the world recession—just as it led the world out of world recession in the early 1980s. We will again generate jobs. Let us remember that during the 1980s Britain created more jobs than most other countries in the European Community combined and we still have a higher percentage in work than in any other country in the Community.

This is a momentous period for our social security system. Major change is likely to come to a head in the next few years for a variety of reasons. First, the Maxwell case has made it clear that we need to review the occupational pension framework. Unlike the hon. Member for Oldham, West, we agree with the Select Committee on Social Security on that. I shall be announcing my plans for that review to the House in the course of the next few weeks. The Barber case will put heavy burdens on private pension schemes. The Coloroll case will clarify that and, together with the Maastricht protocol, will, we hope, remove the threat of retrospection. But it will leave many loose ends to be tied up.

The Government are committeed to equalise the pension age. I shall be considering the responses to our consultation paper, when consultation ends in June, with a genuinely open mind.

In April 1993, there will be a change in responsibility for community care, which will involve major changes in social security. A new Child Support Agency is being established. Finally, our pledge on personal pensions has to be implemented.

Let me make clear my priorities. While fulfilling our commitments, I believe that we must apply six criteria. I want to focus benefits, with any improvements that we can afford, on the most needy. I want to minimise the disincentive effects of our benefit structure. I want to simplify the system wherever possible. I want to ensure that our system adapts to the differing needs of the people it is intended to benefit—the elderly, the disabled, the unemployed and families—not to force people to adapt to a complex system. I want to bear down on fraud and abuse, since every penny misappropriated means less for those in real need. I want to encourage personal responsibility, not undermine it. That is why I attach such importance to the Child Support Agency, whose remit is to ensure that parents meet their legal and moral obligations to help maintain their own children. It is why I shall press ahead to enact our pledge to encourage personal pensions. The extension of personal pensions to 4·5 million people has been an enormous success. It has dramatically widened the range of people with their own pension to supplement that provided by the state. It is increasing the volume of committed long-term saving available for long-term investment by industry. And it has given millions of people greater flexibility and mobility.

The hon. Member for Oldham, West calls the incentives that have encouraged this welcome growth a bribe. His right hon. and learned Friend, in his ill-fated shadow budget, threatened to abolish the incentive—and even to repudiate retrospectively the obligation to pay it in respect of savings made last year. Nothing could demonstrate more clearly the divide not just between Labour and

Conservative, but between Labour and the British people. Labour Members are out of date, out of touch and out of office.

The electorate have shown that they reject Labour propaganda about the failings of our system; they distrust Labour's pledges as ill targeted and irresponsible. They acknowledge the massive increase in benefits that we have financed. They know continuing improvements require a dynamic and enterprising economy. They want extra help to be focused on those in greatest need——

It being Ten o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

Debate to be resumed tomorrow.

Benefits and Mortgage Payments

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Arbuthnot.]*

10 pm

Mr. Simon Burns (Chelmsford): I am grateful to have the opportunity so early in the life of this Parliament to raise an issue of particular importance to two of my constituents—the income support system and mortgage payments. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Bury, North (Mr. Burt) on his elevation to office and on his first Adjournment debate as a Minister. I am not sure whether this is the right thing to say, but I hope that he enjoys this one and goes on to answer many more in the Chamber over the coming years.

The problem that has been highlighted by the case brought to my attention by two constituents—I do not want to name them—illustrates an aspect of policy that I do not believe Parliament envisaged or would want to perpetuate.

The income support system as constituted means that claimants who are repaying mortgages may have an additional amount to cover their mortgage interest paid on top of their usual personal allowance. Obviously, it is paid only for the house-related element of a loan, not for any other items for which a mortgage, rightly or wrongly, has been raised, such as the purchase of a car.

I appreciate that when housing costs are considered "excessive" they may not be met in full; for instance, when a house is unnecessarily large or in an unnecessarily expensive neighbourhood, or when costs are higher than the costs of other suitable accommodation in the same neighbourhood.

I also appreciate that since late last year the Government have legislated to alleviate income support and housing problems, to limit the number of repossessions of the homes of people unfortunately caught in this sad predicament.

Nevertheless, the problems highlighted by my constituents' case raise important issues that must be examined. When there are disputes between the Department of Social Security and claimants over mortgage payments or related matters, they are dealt with by an appeals system established by Parliament. This is the nub of my case and I should like to suggest that individuals are penalised and that the system is stacked against those caught by this problem.

Parliament has created the social security appeal tribunal to adjudicate cases of dispute. Quite rightly, it is immune to political interference, but is the system working as well as it should and as envisaged by Parliament when it established that system?

Although an adjudication officer may refer a claim or question to an SSAT, only the income support applicant has the right to appeal to an SSAT, but the law allows both the applicant and the adjudicating officer the right of appeal against a decision given by an SSAT to the social security commissioners, with leave and on a point of law. That is where the problems arise and cause undue hardship and unfairness to constituents such as mine.

To explain what that means, I shall elaborate a little on the problems still faced by my constituents. Unfortunately, both the husband and wife became unemployed as a result of the economic climate of the past year or so. They had a mortgage of £30,000. To many people, such a mortgage

[Mr. Simon Burns]

would be relatively small and those who are thrifty would welcome it. However, the house is valued at the current market price of not less than £210,000. I suspect that four years ago it was worth noticeably more.

The adjudicating officer took the view when my constituents claimed for income support that with such a small mortgage vis-a-vis the value of the property, they should sell their house and buy a cheaper one. As they did not do that, the adjudicating officer decided that they should not receive help to pay the interest on their mortgage. That raises important issues which I shall discuss later.

My constituents appealed to the tribunal and won. The tribunal, in its reason for the decision, said:

"Effectively this house includes an element of capital which has always been intended to be used when freed by a move down market to buy an annuity or to augment the pensions available to the couple. This is a perfectly prudent and reasonable decision by a married couple and in the view of the Tribunal effectively to force the couple to move at this juncture by selling at a value lower than that which they are satisfied is the proper and reasonable market value would be totally unreasonable."

I wholeheartedly share the tribunal's view, as will every reasonable person. To strengthen its decision, the tribunal added that it

"sees nothing in the regulations which compels them"—

my constituents—

"to take this view".

To add insult to injury, the adjudicating officer has now decided to appeal to the social security commissioner against the tribunal's decision in favour of my constituents. He has been given that right by Parliament, and that raises serious issues which the Minister should address. The system is unfairly loaded against people such as my constituents.

First, people who are desperately seeking jobs will not usually be out of work for long periods vis-a-vis their total working life. Why should they be expected to sell their homes and move down market during what will, one hopes, be a small part of their working life? Surely the benefits system and the mortgage payment regime are designed to help tide over people who have temporarily fallen on hard times or are in difficulties. They are safety nets to provide such people with badly needed financial help when they are seeking jobs and seeking to re-establish their finances.

Secondly, why should my constituents and, I suspect, other people be expected to sell property at a time when there are serious problems in the housing market and property would probably have to be sold at much less than its market value in normal times?

Thirdly, does my hon. Friend the Minister accept that people such as my constituents find it extremely difficult to understand why they should find themselves in such a predicament when a Mr. Peter Julien of Hampstead is able to have his £1,700 a week mortgage paid by the Department of Social Security because he has a £630,000 mortgage, unlike my constituents who have an extremely modest mortgage of £30,000?

Fourthly, my constituents have been told by the officials handling their case that their £30,000 mortgage is too small in comparison with the value of their property and that if they had had a larger mortgage and had not been as thrifty or as financially wise as they have been, the problems that they are now having with the adjudicating officer would not have presented themselves. I suspect that if they had a mortgage of £80,000 or £100,000, the adjudicating officer would not be in the slightest bit interested in them and they would without question be receiving help with their mortgage interest, without appeals to tribunals and without the insult of an appeal against the appeal following the decision in their favour by the tribunal.

Why should my constituents be penalised for being careful and thrifty and having a relatively small mortgage? It is odd that those who are thrifty and minimising the amount of help that they need from the state are penalised. If they had been more foolish, as it were, or if they had not been fortunate enough to have such a small mortgage, they would be receiving moneys without question and without the problems that they have experienced. What justification is there for taking it out on my constituents —that is how it seems to them—because they have a relatively small mortgage?

Fifthly, why should those with larger mortgages find life so much easier under the DSS regime? Why is it that life for those people seems to be not as full of the hassles that face my constituents?

Sixthly, why is the adjudicating officer seeking to use my constituents in a test case when the tribunal to which they have already been has found in their favour? The DSS regime will have access to unlimited public funds and the best legal advice to pursue its appeal against my constituents before the commissioners. My constituents, who are on the income support system—in effect, they are battling to save the house in which they are living—will not have unlimited access to public funds in preparing their case.

It has been suggested that my constituents should go to their local citizens advice bureau for free legal advice and help. I accept that the Chelmsford CAB does a magnificent amount of good work to help individuals, but I do not think that it would seriously suggest that it can compete with the advice to which lawyers for an arm of the DSS will have access. My constituents could possibly seek legal aid, but there are ramifications within that system that are not as clear cut and simple as they might seem at first hand.

I appeal to my hon. Friend the Minister. My constituents are little people who are caught in a situation in which they are clearly out of their depth. Surely the system should not operate in this way. Surely they should not be penalised over and above being out of work against their wishes. They appealed to the tribunal and they won their case, and surely that should be enough. Why is it that an adjudicating officer under powers given to him by the House can take the matter a stage further to appeal against that decision? It seems that the entire system is being weighted in favour not of the applicant and the help that is provided by the state but of those who are meant to be giving the maximum amount of help within the rules and regulations that are provided by the state.

I accept that my hon. Friend the Minister cannot interfere because of the way in which Parliament has set up the system. The principle that we cannot have political interference must be right, but that does not stop Ministers who are responsible for the relevant policy re-examining matters to ascertain whether it is working and has been implemented in the way that Parliament decided that it should be, to provide what I believe should be the maximum amount of help for those who are probably

having the most demoralising, debilitating and miserable time of their life while being out of work, and who on top of that are having to fight for the house in which they live.

10.14 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. Alistair Burt): I want to take this opportunity, Madam Speaker—it is my first opportunity—to congratulate you on your appointment. You have had slightly longer to settle into your position than I have had to settle into mine.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Chelmsford (Mr. Burns) on his good fortune on winning the ballot for the debate and I thank him for his kind remarks about my appointment. I am grateful to him. I also congratulate him on the way in which he explained the sensitive circumstances surrounding the case of his constituents. He did so with his usual care, consideration and clarity.

I welcome this opportunity to comment on my Department's policy on helping income support claimants with their housing costs. Before I do so, I should like to use the occasion of a new Session to tell the House about the provision the Government have made for income support recipients this year. As the House knows, the structure of income support consists of personal allowances, paid according to age and family status, and flat-rate premiums for groups recognised as having special needs, such as disabled and elderly people and families. That enables the Government to focus help most effectively on those groups that face the greatest pressure.

I make no excuse for reminding the House that in 1992 we will ensure that some 5 million people on lower incomes will have the advantage of an increase significantly higher than price increases as measured by the retail prices index. In addition, the uprating index on which the increase is based now better reflects the range of expenditure that income support recipients have to meet. The uprating this year includes items for water bills and miscellaneous items such as repairs and insurance. In fact, this year we have uprated income support by an index that is 2·9 per cent. higher than the RPI, which I am sure the House will agree demonstrates our commitment to helping people on low incomes. The total expenditure on income support will therefore increase by about £1 billion.

I now come to the specific subject matter of the debate—the question of mortgage interest and the benefit system. The purpose of income support help for mortgage interest is to ensure that home owners who are not in work and have suffered a drop in income have sufficient resources when they come on to benefit to meet their reasonable housing commitments without the benefit system being used to pay for a capital asset. Generally, that means that the full interest on loans taken out to buy, repair or make certain improvements to the home is included in the calculation of the claimant's weekly needs.

It would, however, be wrong for the taxpayer to meet an open-ended commitment to pay the full interest on a home loan without regard to the essential nature of home ownership, the type of accommodation occupied as the home and the circumstances of the individual claimant and family. There are, therefore, a number of measures to help to provide a balance between taxpayer, lender and claimant which ensures that the responsibility and burden of home loans are equitably placed. The first of those measures is that the amount allowed for mortgage interest in income support is restricted to 50 per cent. during the first 16 weeks of a benefit claim for someone under the age of 60. That affected 40,000 out of 310,000 claimants receiving help with mortgage interest in May 1990.

The reason for that restriction is that we consider it reasonable to expect lending institutions and borrowers to carry some responsibility for house purchase in the short term, and that restriction is now commonly accepted and is workable. The Council of Mortgage Lenders, which represents more than 90 per cent. of mortgage lenders, has recently renewed assurances given when the rule was introduced that it would not expect anyone to lose his home as a result.

We also think it reasonable to restrict help where the accommodation is not considered to be appropriate for full support by the taxpayer. For the majority of claimants, such a restriction is not applicable and the interest on their mortgages is met in full for as long as their circumstances remain unchanged. However where, for example, the home is expensive compared with others in the same area, where the home is located in an expensive area, or where the size of the accommodation is clearly larger than the requirements of the household, we consider it right to limit the charge to the taxpayer. My hon. Friend made the same point in his opening remarks.

I must stress that such a restriction will apply only if it is reasonable to expect the claimant to move. If it is not reasonable, mortgage support will continue for as long as there is the need. But it would clearly be wrong to put claimants who are able to move into a more privileged position than those who are not on benefit who change their homes when necessary in response to a change in their financial circumstances. For claimants able to move we therefore consider it reasonable to restrict the amount allowed in income support to the amount needed to obtain suitable alternative accommodation. Provided, however, that the claimant was able to afford the mortgage commitment when it was taken on, the restriction is deferred for the first six months of a claim, and for a further six months so long as the claimant is using his or her best endeavours to obtain cheaper accommodation. I believe that the House will agree that a total period of one year in those particular circumstances to find more suitable accommodation provides a reasonable balance between the claimant and the taxpayer. It also puts people who are receiving benefit and those who are not on the same footing, in that similar circumstances will provoke broadly similar reactions.

As my hon. Friend said, he has a constituent caught up in the regulations governing those restrictions, and he makes two particular points on the way that the regulations operate. First, he refers to the case of the Secretary of State for Social Security *v.* Peter Julien, in which judgment was given recently in the Court of Appeal. As is plain from the judgment, the point at issue was whether the social security commissioner was wrong in law in deciding that Mr. Julien could afford the mortgage commitment when it was entered into and whether, as a consequence, the amount allowed for mortgage interest should be restricted from the outset of the claim, rather than from a later date. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is giving that judgment careful consideration, but it clearly has no bearing on the circumstances described by my hon. Friend when he outlined the issues raised by the case of his constituents. They have received full mortgage

[Mr. Alistair Burt]

interest, subject to the restriction to 50 per cent. for the first 16 weeks, taken into account for the full 12-month period allowed by the regulations, and there is no question of a restriction from the outset of their claim.

The second issue raised by my hon. Friend was the treatment of a claimant's equity in the home when a restriction is made. In the circumstances that I have previously outlined, the intention is to restrict the amount allowed in income support to the amount that would be needed if the claimant were to obtain cheaper, suitable, alternative accommodation.

For those claimants who have large mortgages almost equal in value to the value of their property, are in inappropriate accommodation and choose not to move, we consider it reasonable to reduce the burden on the taxpayer by restricting the amount allowed to the amount that would be needed to pay for more appropriate accommodation.

For those with smaller mortgages who have some equity in their homes, we consider it reasonable to assume that such equity should be used to help provide that alternative accommodation. In some cases, the equity would not be enough to provide alternative accommodation without a mortgage. The interest on the smaller mortgage that would be needed to secure that accommodation is included in income support. But in other cases, including the case raised by my hon. Friend, a mortgage would not be needed, and no amount for mortgage interest is allowed.

It has never been the intention of the legislation to drive people from their homes. On the contrary, the scheme provides full help with the costs of appropriate accommodation without restriction. Even where the accommodation is considered inappropriate for the taxpayer to provide indefinite support, in the circumstances that I have previously described, the workings of the scheme, with its allowance of up to 12 months to enable claimants to find more appropriate accommodation, still provides that bridge of support needed by some in difficulties. As to whether it is reasonable to consider whether the home is an investment, I sympathise with those selling in the present housing market, but it would be unfair to alter the income support rules specifically to take account of that. It would be unfair both to those who are not on income support and have to move in a difficult market and to those who have chosen to save money in other ways who are unable to receive any income support at all while their savings are more than £8,000. It is also helpful to remember that lower property prices cut both ways—less is realised on sale, but, equally, less is needed to buy.

Perhaps I should take the opportunity to remind the House that the income support scheme provides a substantial sum in support of mortgage interest. In May 1989, the last year for which figures are available, some £554 million went to some 310,000 claimants—an average of £34 a week for each claimant.

My hon. Friend raised two further issues about the adjudication officer and his role in the scheme. I remind the House that the adjudication officer acts independently of the Department. His role is to establish the facts of a case and to apply social security statute and case law to those facts. In his consideration of claims or questions arising under the mortgage interest regulations, his decision depends very much on the claimant's individual circumstances and on the circumstances of the type of mortgage he holds. That, as can be imagined, can get very complicated and allows scope for dispute. It is here that the appellate system—the social security appeal tribunal and the social security commissioners—plays a vital role, in that it allows a higher independent adjudicating authority to reconsider in full those cases where such a dispute has arisen.

My hon. Friend suggested nevertheless that in such disputes, the odds are stacked heavily in favour of the adjudication officer because of what he refers to as the machinery of the state. This is far from the truth. As I said, the adjudicating authorities act independently of my Department, and that is clearly evident in the manner in which they undertake their duties.

The adjudication officer is represented at all appeal tribunals by a presenting officer—but, and this point needs to be stressed, it is not the job of that representative to "win" the case. His role is to act impartially—he is known as "a friend of the court"; to help the tribunal to assess accurately the facts and relevant law. He is as likely to make a point in favour of an appellant as he is of the adjudication officer. The tribunal itself has an inquisitorial function, not an adversarial one, as is the case in the courts. It has an enabling role, in that it actively seeks to elicit the facts and to enable appellants, be they represented or not, to present their own cases.

The key for all tribunals is that they must at all times observe the rules of natural justice, thereby ensuring that both parties to the dispute are afforded a fair hearing. That policy of equal treatment extends also to the right of appeal to the social security commissioners, about which my hon. Friend expressed some concern.

As my hon. Friend is aware, such an appeal can only be made on a point of law and with leave of the chairman of the tribunal or a commissioner. Moreover, when contemplating applying for such leave, the adjudication officer will seek guidance from the chief adjudication officer. An adjudication officer on the chief adjudication officer's staff will usually make an application for leave only where there is a substantial amount of benefit at stake, either currently or potentially, or where it is felt that a commissioner's decision would contribute significantly to case law. It is important to have the law clarified. I assure my hon. Friend that it is a carefully considered response, based on a genuine belief that a tribunal decision is in error of law.

I am sure that the House understands that, in such circumstances, the doubts of the adjudication officer that the law had been incorrectly interpreted should have an avenue for redress. We see that means of seeking clarification of the law on behalf of us all as essential for ensuring the continuity and consistency of the law, and for safeguarding the correct expenditure of public funds.

We have to look also at the question of fairness. If my hon. Friend accepts, and I think that he does, that local tribunals operate independently, I hope that he will also accept that for the sake of equity, both parties—that is, the appellant and the adjudication officer—must be given the same right of appeal against their decisions. It would be against natural justice for that right to be given solely to the claimant.

I will say a few words about representation at tribunals, and before the commissioners. I accept that, in spite of the

best efforts of the tribunal and the adjudication officer's representative, an appellant can feel exposed and inadequately equipped in such a situation. For that reason, my Department actively encourages appellants to obtain advice and representation before attending any tribunal hearing. With legal aid not being available for representation, appellants are directed towards the local advice agencies—for example, the citizens advice bureaux, who provide their services free of charge. Over the years, such organisations have built up a wealth of expertise in social security matters and have represented thousands of appellants before local tribunals and the commissioners.

With regard to the commissioners, although my hon. Friend believes that the advice provided by such lay organisations would be inadequate when faced with the Department's lawyers, experience suggests that is not necessarily the case, and that argument also fails to take account of the commissioners' independent role and legal expertise. In view of that, I can reassure my hon. Friend that his constituents need have no reservations about approaching their local CAB.

I thank the House for its patience in listening to my speech on this complex yet important subject. I hope that I have been able to reassure my hon. Friend on the issues that he very properly raised. I fully appreciate the very difficult decisions that now face the constituents to whom he referred, but I hope that he agrees that the Government provide very substantial help for mortgage interest through the income support scheme, that the rules under which that help is given place the burden of home ownership equitably between claimant and taxpayer and that the way in which we try to ensure the balance of decisions has been properly considered.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at half-past Ten o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 8 May 1992

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Members Sworn

The following Members took and subscribed the Oath: Ken Maginnis, esquire, Fermanagh and South Tyrone.

Right honourable Sir David Martin Scott Steel, Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale.

BILLS PRESENTED

CARDIFF BAY BARRAGE BILL

Mr. Secretary Hunt, supported by Mr. Secretary Howard, Sir Wyn Roberts, Mr. Anthony Nelson and Mr. Gwilym Jones, presented a Bill to provide for the construction by the Cardiff Bay Development Corporation of a barrage across the mouth of Cardiff Bay with an outer harbour and for related works; to make provision for the acquisition and use of land for the works; to make provision about the operation and management of the barrage, the outer harbour and the water impounded by the barrage; to make provision for dealing with property damage resulting from any alteration of groundwater levels which may occur in consequence of the construction of the barrage; to enable other protective provisions to be made; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First and Second time and committed to a Standing Committee and to be printed [Bill 4.], pursuant to the Standing Order of 16 March.

BANKRUPTCY (SCOTLAND)

Mr. Secretary Lang, supported by Mr. Secretary Heseltine, Mr. Secretary Rifkind, Mr. Michael Portillo and Lord James Douglas-Hamilton, presented a Bill to amend the Bankruptcy (Scotland) Act 1985; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Monday next and to be printed [Bill 6.]

Orders of the Day

Debate on the Address

[THIRD DAY]

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question.

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, as follows:—

Most Gracious Sovereign,

We, Your Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled, beg leave to offer our humble thanks to Your Majesty for the Gracious Speech which Your Majesty has addressed to both Houses of Parliament—*[Mr. Kenneth Baker.]*

Question again proposed.

Foreign Affairs

9.38 am

Madam Speaker: Before I call the Foreign Secretary, may I inform the House that I know that many right hon. and hon. Members wish to take part in the debate. I have resisted the urge to place a 10-minute limit on speeches, but I hope that hon. Members will respond by limiting their speeches in that way and so allow everyone to be called. There is also the possibility of a statement at 11 o'clock, and I hope that hon. Members will keep that in mind, too.

9.39 am

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Douglas Hurd): Returning to the Foreign Office after the election campaign, I had the impression that the world had in some way gathered speed. My diary, the diary of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and the diaries of other people for the next seven months have filled with extraordinary rapidity. That is not just because we will hold the presidency of the European Community in the second half of this year, although that will be exacting. The whole process of international diplomacy has become more intense with the end of the cold war. That is partly because of new problems such as nationalism which, time and again, overflows its banks and threatens to flood the new landscape.

Techniques and institutions designed for the cold war must now be rethought and reshaped if they are to retain their usefulness. Britain is part of the Security Council of the United Nations, NATO, the European Community, the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe, the Council of Europe and the Commonwealth. They are all rethinking their purpose and machinery.

Obviously, I cannot deal today with all the problems that mark the world—not even all the important ones—or with all the enterprises that we have in hand. I hope that right hon. and hon. Members who are interested in subjects that I do not cover will forgive me. They will have other opportunities. I would rather say something more substantial about a few matters instead of something platitudinous about everything.

As a European power, we are concerned first of all with the prosperity and security of Europe. The main instrument for the prosperity of Europe is obviously the European Community. In that respect, I do not mean

[Mr. Douglas Hurd]

simply the prosperity of the existing 12 members. There is an increasing queue of applicants for full membership and that shows that the Community has a magnetic effect on its neighbours to the north, east and south.

As the Queen's Speech sets out, we shall soon be asking the House to pass the legislation necessary to ratify the treaty of Maastricht. That will give us an opportunity to renew the fruitful debates that we had in the House just before and just after the Maastricht conference. I do not want to consider all those issues today; I want simply to make a main point about the Community.

At Maastricht, we agreed to convene another intergovernmental conference in 1996 which will look at those elements of the treaty where we have agreed to review arrangements, without prejudice as to the outcome, of which common foreign and security policy is an obvious example. At the same time, the Commission was asked to prepare for the next summit in Lisbon in June a paper that would help to guide us in considering fresh applications for membership.

Although one might think otherwise from some newspaper reports, the Commission has not yet considered —let alone published—that report. However, I can give a broad British view about the relationship between the enlargement of the Community and its institutions. We are strongly in favour of enlargement. We believe that the Community will have to shape constructive replies to all the applications for membership. In particular, we would hope and expect to see a first wave of new members—countries that are part of the European Free Trade Association but which have applied or may apply for full membership of the Community. As the House is aware, in that respect Austria, Sweden and Finland have already applied and there will conceivably be others.

During our presidency, we would hope to prepare the way for negotiations to be concluded with those countries next year so that they and we can ratify the new agreements in 1994 and make their membership possible at the beginning of 1995.

Any arrival of new members will mean mechanical changes in the Community. The number of Commissioners, the voting rights in Council and the membership of the European Parliament will all have to be adjusted if new members come in. However, that need not and, in our view, should not justify reopening before 1996 the debate on the Community's institutions which was concluded at Maastricht. I see no advantage in permanent negotiation on the Community's institutions.

By 1996, we will be contemplating a second wave which may well include the countries whose Foreign Ministers I met this week—Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Poland. However, they will not arrive as full members of the Community until after further discussion of the Community's institutions provided for in 1996.

The Community has enough on its plate without indulging in a standing wrangle about its institutions. Let us solve the pressing financial and trading problems, complete the single market and pave the way for the first wave of new members. That will be the priority of the British presidency.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Notwithstanding what the Foreign Secretary just said about 1996 and the admission of new members and the fact that the paper that is due to be presented at the June summit has still not been discussed, we have obviously all read the newspaper reports about the proposal of Mr. Delors for some kind of supranational executive. I understand the position of the Foreign Secretary, but what is his view on those articles? One must assume that there is some substance in the suggestion about what Mr. Delors will present to the June summit.

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Gentleman is too old a hand to believe any such thing. Correspondents who are short of a story listen to someone talking in the Commission in Brussels and write a story. I will comment on the report when we see it. It has not yet even been considered by the Commission.

The security of Europe may not seem to be an urgent subject for people in this country who feel relatively secure after the disappearance of the Soviet threat. However, that is not the case in central and eastern Europe, as I discovered again this week. Security in many newly democratic countries seems as much at risk as their prosperity. They see old but suppressed rivalries breaking out once more in new hatreds. They look with envy at the way in which western Europe has managed to put to sleep for ever disputes which used to lead to killing, such as those in Alsace-Lorraine and Schleswig-Holstein, and they want to be part of the arrangement that has created such peaceful certainties.

We have too many institutions in that area and there is inevitably an overlap. How can we develop the new co-operation council formed by NATO to make possible a dialogue with those who were our enemies? Should NATO's membership expand? If so, on what principles? How can we strengthen the Western European Union so that it works effectively as the European pillar of NATO and the forum from which its members can, if necessary, plan operations outside the NATO area?

Can the CSCE, which is huge in membership but tiny in strength and staff, provide the means by which democracies in central and eastern Europe can call upon the military and administrative resources of western Europe to deal with disputes between or within states? Unless we can find the answers to those questions fairly soon, we shall run into trouble. That is why the ministerial meetings this summer at NATO and the WEU and the summit at Helsinki in July will be of far more than routine importance. They will deal with the essential questions about the security of Europe.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): Does the Foreign Secretary agree that under title V of the treaty of European union, the answers to the questions that he has rightly posed will have to be common answers of the European union so long as the treaties are endorsed? Therefore, they will not be entirely matters for us. Does not the Bill that the right hon. Gentleman published yesterday exclude consideration of title V, under which the common policy is to be arrived at? Indeed, on matters of justice and home affairs, about which there will be a great deal of legislation in the House in future, title VI is also excluded. Would it not have been wiser to arrange things so that both those matters could be discussed in debate on the Bill?

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Gentleman is trying to have it both ways. He is one of those who have argued strongly that discussion between Europeans about foreign policy should

not be part of the Community. We have achieved that at Maastricht. The hon. Gentleman is talking about intergovernmental work. He cannot, at the same time, expect us to put it in a Bill. It is not to do with the European Communities Act 1972. It is not to do with the legislation that the House needs to pass. It is not legislation, precisely because we have achieved the objective that the hon. Gentleman has preached at us for a long time.

I now refer to the striking example and the lack of security in central and eastern Europe. In the past few weeks in Yugoslavia, our eyes—our feelings—have been drawn to Bosnia. The ceasefire is holding only in places. In other places such as Mostar there is still fierce fighting. The Bosnian Foreign Minister came to see me yesterday evening. I agreed with him on the need to increase the pressures on Serbia and the JNA. I am in no doubt that we must continue our efforts to negotiate ceasefires—perhaps ceasefire after ceasefire—until one of them holds.

I pay tribute to the work of Lord Carrington and his team, to Ambassador Cutileiro, the Portuguese representative of the presidency in charge of the negotiations, to Major Doyle and to Mr. Brade, the sole British member of the negotiating team in Sarajevo.

I talked yesterday to a young British monitor on leave from the EC team in Bosnia. Anyone who listens to people who are going through that experience will understand both the difficulty and the worth of what they are trying to do. Some of them are young and inexperienced, but they are brave people who are trying, village by village, to keep people from killing and attacking each other.

May we step back just for a moment from the details and consider more basically what we and our partners are trying to do in Yugoslavia? There is no surge of public interest here in the subject. I do not know whether the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) had the same experience, but I do not recall being asked a single question about Yugoslavia in the election. There are passionate feelings here among individuals and, of course, in the media. They take different forms. There are those who question whether there should be European or United Nations action at all in Yugoslavia, although I must say that inaction would have meant that, by now, Serbia would have dominated the whole of Yugoslavia, except perhaps Slovenia. There are others who view the matter as Serbia's responsibility and would have wished us to intervene earlier and with greater force against the Serbs and the JNA, both in Croatia and now in Bosnia. Those are serious arguments and they have to be dealt with.

I do not hide my view that the best answer would have been Yugoslavia by consent—that is, a new constitution that kept the country together by giving its component parts greater rights and freedoms. I do not see any grounds for admiring the kind of destructive nationalism which is now loose in Yugoslavia. Its peoples will look back on an opportunity lost. That the opportunity was lost irretrievably last autumn there can be no doubt. From that time, it became clear, as it is clear today, that the only acceptable answer is independence for each of the former republics of Yugoslavia within the present borders. Republics may combine as Serbia and Montenegro now propose to do, but that has to be by consent, not force. However, if we look at the ethnic map of Yugoslavia, we will see that that solution works only on two conditions —first, that each republic respects the integrity of its neighbours and, secondly, that within each republic there is effective recognition of the rights of minorities.

Neither of the two strongest contenders—neither the Serbs nor the Croats—have fully observed either of those conditions or are fully observing them today. But the Serbs, through their considerable—not total—control of the Yugoslav national army bear the heavier responsibility for the suffering and destruction that have resulted from the neglect of those conditions.

The whole effort of the Community, of Lord Carrington, of Mr. Vance for the United Nations, who are working very closely as old friends, of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the diplomats, the monitors and the liaison officers, has been directed at achieving peace based on those principles. Of course, we could have refused the effort or we could have given it up when it became difficult. We could have treated those concerned in Yugoslavia as hopeless cases—just bands of brigands—who should be left to kill each other in their villages and mountains until exhaustion led them to stop. If we had taken that line and if there had been no EC presence and no United Nations effort, there would have been no ceasefire in Croatia and the killing there and in Bosnia would have been substantially greater. I do not think that the House would have welcomed such cynicism as compatiable with any sense of decency or order in the area.

We cannot suppose that, by armed force, we or anyone can impose peace on our terms and turn Yugoslavia into an international protectorate. A ceasefire has to come before an international force can be useful. Peacemaking has to come before peacekeeping.

We have heard well-publicised arguments within the Twelve about the timing of recognition of those republics, but not about the principle. Those arguments are still continuing as regards Macedonia, whose President has been in London and whom I saw yesterday. We have had to weigh economic measures, both positive and negative, but on the two principles that I mentioned there has been no argument inside the Community, and I am sure that the resulting collective effort has to continue. The task of the peacemakers is hard—it often is. The disappointments come more often than the successes. Ceasefire follows broken ceasefire until one ceasefire more or less holds. It is quite easy for onlookers to jeer as the stone, which was so patiently pushed near the top of the hill, rolls down again to the bottom and everything has to start once more.

I have no time for the notion that we in the European Community should give up the search for agreement or should fragment our policies and go our separate ways in the Balkans, as we did before the great war, with disastrous results. We are playing our part. We will be at the head of the EC monitoring mission from the beginning of July. As the House knows, we are providing a field ambulance for the United Nations peacekeeping force. The 36-strong advance party is already deployed. We hope that the full 260-strong unit will be operational by the first week of June.

We have no legal compulsion to act jointly with our partners in Yugoslavia. I hope that the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing), a former Chairman of the European Legislation Select Committee, will listen to this point, because it bears on something that he said. All our discussions prove, as far as I am concerned, that we were right to resist majority voting on such matters at

[Mr. Hurd]

Maastricht. That is our view. It means constant determination to reach agreement among ourselves, to give the lead from the EC, which the United Nations and particularly the United States and Russia expect from us, to apply all the persuasive pressures that can induce those concerned in Yugoslavia that the two principles that I mentioned are not just concepts which are tossed about at the conference table in Brussels or Lisbon but are the plain conditions for a peaceful future for the peoples of Yugoslavia.

Sir Russell Johnston (Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber): I have two quick questions for the Foreign Secretary. First, has he direct contact with the Serbs? If so, has he been saying anything to them about the particular problems of Kosovo, which is undoubtedly the outstanding example of Serbian repression? Secondly, as he mentioned talking to the Macedonian President the other day, is there any lessening of Greek opposition?

Mr. Hurd: On the first point, we are certainly in touch with the Serbs through our ambassador in Belgrade. They know our strong belief that they need to provide for minority rights in Kosovo along the lines laid down in Lord Carrington's peace plan. On Macedonia, no. There is a deadlock. The Macedonians propose to call themselves Macedonian. The Greeks believe, as the Greek Prime Minister passionately explained to us last weekend, that that implies a threat to Greece. There is a deadlock in the matter which is damaging and which the presidency is trying to break.

I shall now say a word about a far too longstanding dispute in Europe. Britain, along with Greece and Turkey, is still a guarantor of the Cyprus constitution. That constitution has not seemed to count much in recent years. The division of the island since 1974 has nurtured bitter mistrust between the two communities. As there is not much direct communication on the island, outsiders have to take on the difficult task of go-between. We are the largest contributor to the peacekeeping force in Cyprus.

The previous Secretary-General of the United Nations made some good progress towards an outright settlement in the first half of 1991. Then there was stalemate and disappointment. Following my discussions in Ankara and Athens last month, I believe that there is now a real chance —I put it no higher than that—for new progress. The United Nations Secretary-General is the person to carry that forward and we fully support him. We work to increase the activity and involvement of the Security Council, including the permanent five.

The new Secretary-General has just circulated, following the most recent resolution, a new set of ideas which have been well received on the island, in Ankara and in Athens. We must help to keep up the momentum. The outline of a settlement is there—one Cyprus, a bicommunal and bizonal federal state with two regional governments as equal partners. But then there are the sensitive issues of territory, displaced persons and the powers and composition of the central Government. Those issues have received a thorough airing in the past 15 months. There are gaps, which will be hard to breach, but both sides see the dangers of a recurrence of the ugly events of the past. They draw different conclusions and neither has convinced the other of its goodwill.

We have a role, which we shall continue to play, to convince the two sides of the need to come together on the basis of the Secretary-General's set of ideas.

Mr. Tom Cox (Tooting): I welcome the Secretary of State's comments as, I am sure, will all Members of Parliament who are deeply involved in Cyprus. There is a debate on Cyprus in the Council of Europe this week and specifically this morning. The clear impression of those who have been to Strasbourg this week is that sadly there is still deep hostility to the report which will be published and discussed today and which was drawn up at the specific request of the Council of Europe. I welcome what the Foreign Secretary said today, but sadly there are still many hurdles to get over.

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Gentleman is perfectly correct about that. There are wide differences, but I believe that in both Greece and Turkey and on the island we now have people in charge of affairs who see the need for a settlement. That has not always been so, but I believe that it is so now. It may not always be so in the future if this opportunity is lost. That is why it is important that it should not be lost.

Mr. Cyril D. Townsend (Bexleyheath): I welcome my right hon. Friend's comments on Cyprus. May I encourage him and his senior ministerial colleagues to visit the island? We have a rather poor record in that regard in the past 10 years. My right hon. Friend mentioned the problem of the settlers in the north. He will know how the Turks have changed the demographic structure of northern Cyprus. It will be extremely difficult to resolve these difficult international issues if whole populations are moved from one country to another. What is the British Government's attitude to that specific problem?

Mr. Hurd: I mentioned the specific problems of displaced persons. It is one of the most difficult points and one on which progress needs to be made before we can reach agreement on a constitution. My hon. Friend may be right about our actual visits to the island, but we are in close touch with President Vassiliou and, indeed, his Foreign Minister. They are often here. We met at Harare and we meet in New York. There is a constant flow of communication between Nicosia and ourselves.

I have come to the conclusion that we in western Europe must build a new and stronger relationship with Turkey. Mr. Demirel's new Government have a formidable array of problems. I have mentioned Cyprus, where they have a clear responsibility to discharge. There is also inflation, the promotion of human rights, unrest among the Turkish Kurds and terrorism. There are strong feelings in the House and elsewhere about human rights. When I visited Ankara and Istanbul last month, I found that the new Prime Minister and his colleagues were sincerely determined to make progress on all those matters.

The interests and influence of Turkey stretch across the middle east and into central Asia. To the new republics in central Asia, Turkey is a secular, democratic model. There is another specific point. For the past year, Turkey has allowed Britain, the United States and France to station aircraft at Incirlik to monitor the situation in northern Iraq. That is crucial to the safety of the peoples of northern Iraq. We are in touch with the Turks about our hope that the agreement will be renewed beyond the end of June. I

believe that the Turks and, indeed, all members of the coalition, realise the importance of those aircraft. Their presence helps to keep up the pressure on Saddam Hussein to comply with the United Nations resolutions. We very much hope that that operation can continue.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Will the Foreign Secretary assure the House that in his negotiations with the Turkish Government he is making serious representations about the many denials of human rights throughout Turkey, the treatment of the Kurdish people in the south and east of the country, the large numbers of people who are still in prison for quasi-political offences and the role of the military, as opposed to the Government, in the oppression of many people in that country?

Mr. Hurd: As I just said, I explained to the Turkish Government when I was in Turkey the anxiety felt in Britain on those matters. The hon. Gentleman follows these matters and will know that the Turkish Government have just decided on a range of judicial reforms dealing with periods of detention, access to lawyers and so on—issues which are familiar to us in the House. If the Government can carry those reforms through the Parliament, it will be a substantial step forward in the direction that the hon. Gentleman wants.

It is in our interests that Turkey, a stalwart member of NATO, should build a new relationship with the European Community covering political, economic and security matters. We and our partners will have to work hard to recast the present relationship. We have offered full participation through associate membership of the Western European Union. It is a big job which will need some fresh and imaginative thinking on the part of the Europeans, including Greece and the democratic Government of Turkey.

So far, I have focused on Europe, but, of course, we have concerns elsewhere in the world. I wish to mention one of them. We must maintain steady pressure on Libya to meet the demands that the British, French and United States Governments wholeheartedly endorsed by the Security Council, have made following the bombings of the Pan Am flight over Lockerbie and the French UTA flight over west Africa. We in Britain are often asked to have regard for the sensitivities of other people who have suffered. We have tried to do so, but it cannot be a one-way business. Some 440 people died in those two outrages.

The Dumfries and Galloway police undertook a painstaking investigation, at the end of which the Lord Advocate authorised the issue of warrants. The demand that the two officials against whom the warrants were issued should be handed over was endorsed by the Security Council and limited sanctions were enforced. The hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) is not in his place, but he will read what has been said. I wish to make three points to him and other hon. Members. The demand that the two officials should be handed over was not put together by Her Majesty's Government and the United States Administration. Hon. Members who suggest that it was some sort of political job know perfectly well how the police and the prosecuting authorities work in Scotland and in this country. The evidence—I underline the word "evidence"—pointed to those two men and no one else. If other evidence—again I underline the word "evidence"—had pointed in other directions, those leads would obviously have been followed.

If we are serious about resisting terrorism, we cannot allow that crime to be forgotten and the evidence so carefully put together to be neglected. We do not seek to change the Government of Libya. Nor are our practical demands unreasonable. If by some procedure or other the two men were handed over to either Scottish or United States jurisdiction, the position would be transformed. There are other Security Council requirements, but if that requirement were met, the position would be transformed.

We note the efforts that the Libyan authorities continually make to persuade the world that they have changed their ways. But those efforts are not persuasive to us unless those two individuals are brought to trial. Colonel Gaddafi needs to draw a clear, permanent line under the history of his support for terrorism. It is worth making the point that if the two men stand trial in Scotland, they can be sure that it will be fair and in accordance with normal Scottish procedures, including trial by jury. They will not be subjected to interrogation while awaiting trial. They will have the right to remain silent throughout the proceedings. They will be under the protection of the courts at all times. While in custody they may, if they wish, have daily visits by United Nations or other observers, who would, of course, be free to attend the trial.

We need to keep up the pressure on Iraq. There is some sign that that is paying dividends, but vigilance and patience are still required. The investigations of the United Nations special commission in Iraq over the past year have revealed nuclear, chemical and biological programmes far bigger than we first suspected. Inspectors have made progress—they have supervised the destruction of weapons, components, production equipment and facilities crucial to those programmes. That destruction is scheduled to continue until at least the end of this year. We may now be nearing the bottom of the Iraqi dirty tricks barrel, but we want to cleanse that barrel completely.

In the meantime, we and our coalition partners will continue to do what we can to prevent the Iraqi regime from persecuting its civilian population, both in the Shia areas in the south and the Kurdish areas in the north. Since the election, some hon. Members have spoken to me about recent attacks by the regime on the Shias in the south, and we are worried about that. We must keep a close watch on the humanitarian position in Iraq. We must help the United Nations, which is co-ordinating the international relief effort—to which Britain has given more than £50 million since April last year. However, in the long run, although the humanitarian element is necessary, it is not sufficient. The basic problem can be solved only when Iraq implements the Security Council resolutions, which would then allow Iraq to sell its oil to pay for humanitarian supplies.

We have historical responsibilities in other parts of the world, most obviously in the dependent territories. We have just appointed a new governor for Hong Kong.

Mr. Tony Banks: A nice little job that.

Mr. Hurd: If the hon. Gentleman knew a little more about it, he would not excite himself in that way. There is no more demanding a job in the public service. I pay tribute to what Lord Wilson has achieved during his five

[Mr. Hurd]

years as governor. He has successfully steered Hong Kong through some difficult moments. It must be of great satisfaction to him that he is handing over the governorship of Hong Kong at a time when that country is prosperous, forward-looking and has greater confidence in its future than at any time in recent years.

It was right to make a change now and Chris Patten has the right mix of talents to make an outstanding governor of Hong Kong. I get two overriding impressions when I go to Hong Kong or meet people from there. First, they want the Government to stand up for Hong Kong's interests in dealing with the People's Republic of China, but, secondly, they want us to ensure a smooth transition. Harsh words and diplomatic commotions upset confidence, and confidence is essential for the future of capitalist Hong Kong. Its future rests on confidence. Virtually everybody in Hong Kong accepts that its future lies with the carrying out of the joint declaration with China. That has brought a stability which has allowed Hong Kong to prosper.

What was not foreseen in 1984 was the way in which the economies of Hong Kong and southern China would interlock. That is happening very quickly now, to the benefit of both sides. It has stimulated Hong Kong's growth and has shown the world that Hong Kong and China can co-operate successfully. For the southern Chinese provinces, it has brought investment and skills for their development. That is encouraging and it is the main reason why there is greater confidence in Hong Kong than there was a year ago.

The dynamism of Hong Kong's economy brings opportunities for Britain. As the House will know, last week a consortium including Trafalgar House and Costain won a massive and exciting contract to build one of the largest single-span bridges in the world as part of Hong Kong's new airport. That was the result of the agreement that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister reached last autumn. I am sure that the House will wish to join me in congratulating the British companies in winning a hard-fought contest on their merits. It brings the total value of the contracts won by British industry in Hong Kong and southern China this year to more than £1 billion. That shows the measure of what is happening not just in Hong Kong but in the provinces of southern China.

The new governor will find the political development of Hong Kong high on his list of priorities. With his advice, we shall need soon to start putting in place arrangements for the 1995 elections to the Legislative Council. As the House knows, we will raise with the Chinese the need for a faster pace of democratisation. We shall also have a range of other issues to discuss with them. We want—this is familiar ground to the House—to promote the political development of Hong Kong in a way that is capable of enduring beyond 1997—a through train. Reconciling those two requirements will be one of the main tasks in Hong Kong over the next year or so.

It is a huge and amazing privilege at this time to be the Foreign Secretary of a country which, by history and vocation, works at the centre of the world's problems—and I have sketched only one or two of them. Sometimes, like most hon. Members, I feel anxious about the new landscape in the world, and sometimes I feel optimistic. The dangers are clear, but so are the opportunities. My colleagues in the Foreign Office and I continue to rely on the knowledge and experience of right hon. and hon. Members in all parts of the House, sometimes on general matters and sometimes on particular problems in which they take an interest. I hope that they find us, and will continue to find us, ready listeners. I do not regard foreign affairs as a necessary battlefield between the political parties. We all share a commitment to make, on behalf of this country, a decent contribution to a safer and more decent world.

10.16 am

Mr. Gerald Kaufman (Manchester, Gorton): I congratulate you, Madam Deputy Speaker, on your appointment. It is a pleasure to be addressing the House while you are in the Chair. Your well-known concern for innocent and defenceless creatures will no doubt, from time to time, be welcomed in all parts of the House.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): I can give the right hon. Gentleman that assurance.

Mr. Kaufman: I had myself in mind, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The beginning of a Parliament is a time to take stock and to look forward to the sort of world that we want to see when this Parliament comes to an end four or five years from now. We need to look at the world as it was five years ago and assess what progress has been achieved and what setbacks have been endured.

Change has been so precipitate that it is difficult now to imagine the world that the new Parliament faced in 1987. The cold war gripped the entire planet and communism controlled the Soviet Union and the whole of eastern Europe from the Baltic states to Albania. The iron curtain, running through a divided Germany and a divided Berlin, split off the democracies from communist autocracy. Soviety troops fought guerrillas in an occupied Afghanistan. There were no nuclear disarmament agreements between what President Reagan still called the evil empire and his United States. The INF treaty had not yet been agreed and the START agreement was very far off, subject to unsolved political and technical problems. Conventional disarmament talks were bogged down in Vienna.

On the other hand, China seemed a land of burgeoning hope. Multi-party democracy remained off the Chinese agenda, but the cultural revolution had been repudiated; the country was opening up economically to the outside world; the joint declaration between Britain and China on the future of Hong Kong was regarded as a breakthrough, with its promise of one country and two systems; and Tiananmen square, if referred to at all, was known as the public space where increasing numbers of western tourists photographed each other against exotic backgrounds.

In the middle east, war meant the seemingly endless conflict between Iraq and Iran. Both warring parties were regarded as odious, but many viewed Iraq as the lesser of the two evils. The west, including Britain, the Soviet Union and China readily, even eagerly, armed Saddam Hussein, and both Kuwait and Saudi Arabia financed Saddam's war machine as a barrier against the onrush of Muslim fundamentalism.

Nearby, the Palestinians seemed resigned to Israeli occupation. The intifada had not yet begun, peace talks

between Israel and her Arab neighbours seemed unimaginable and no political party in Israel risked contemplating negotiations with the Palestinians.

In South Africa, Nelson Mandela was completing his 23rd year in gaol, a prisoner of a regime determined to maintain every one of the apartheid laws and unwilling to loosen its grip on Namibia. Further north, the legitimate Government of Angola continued to be beset by Unita rebels. Across the Atlantic, the Pinochet regime continued to maintain its stranglehold on Chile. The United Nations was in stalemate, its Security Council frequently unable to act and always liable to the veto of one or other of the cold war contenders.

Much has changed, and much of what has changed has changed for the better, although there are some areas where sorrow and foreboding still prevail. Five years from now, shall we be able to look back on a further half decade of dramatic change, much of it welcome and beneficial? What part will the United Kingdom have played in whatever changes have taken place? We should not, and must not, overestimate the part that we can play, but, as the Foreign Secretary said, we are unique in being a member of a number of international organisations—G7, NATO, the European Community and the Commonwealth, together with having a permanent seat on the Security Council—so we have interlocking opportunities that are not available to any of our allies, including the United States.

Will Britain five years from now have been a catalyst and an initiator in beneficial change? Or will Britain have dragged its heels and held progress back? Will the British Government have met the challenges of the first half of the 1990s, having too often failed to meet challenges in the 1980s? This House can play its part in urging the Government to meet those challenges.

Nobody expected the end of the cold war to produce a prosperous, democratic Europe overnight. On the other hand, more should have been done, and more must be done, to provide the economic and industrial underpinning that is essential if the former communist countries are not to slide into chaos. They must be helped to build on their democratic aspirations so that they do not fall into the kind of turmoil to which Yugoslavia is tragically subject and to which the Foreign Secretary referred.

The turmoil in Yugoslavia is a warning of what could happen on a far greater scale, with far wider and unpredictable international ramifications, if urgent and substantial action is not taken to underpin democracy in the former Soviet Union and the rest of former communist Europe. Such chaos, particularly in the former Soviet Union, must be avoided at all costs. Beyond Gorbachev there was Yeltsin. If Yeltsin and his counterparts go, their successors will not be more, but much less, democratic —authoritarians of the right instead of the pseudo left.

The Labour party has for several years urged a new Marshall plan to assist the reconstruction of central and eastern Europe and to underpin its burgeoning democracy. We welcome the fact that others increasingly call for such a new Marshall plan. We welcome the progress that has been achieved in aid for Russia, but such aid is still too narrowly based and, despite its growing dimensions, is still too unambitious. The G7 summit in Munich in July must address itself to those basic problems and issues that the G7 summit in London last July culpably ignored or deliberately evaded. Time is slipping by. There are not many opportunities left. This one must not be lost. NATO and the west must help to solve the military and strategic problems left behind by the disintegration of the Soviet Union.

In the Gracious Speech, the Government rightly voice their support for the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, but, with the cold war over, with Russia now seeking to be an ally rather than an enemy and with every NATO Government ruling out a land conflict in Europe, the alliance has still not found a new role. It has decided, rightly, as President Bush said, that nuclear weapons must be weapons truly of last resort.

But NATO still has no clear policy for nuclear arms. There are eight strategic nuclear powers in the world since the break-up of the Soviet Union. One of the largest, Kazakhstan, has made no progress in accepting its responsibilities as a nuclear power to participate in nuclear arms control. Nor, indeed, has the United Kingdom.

It is all very well to talk, as the Gracious Speech does, of helping Russia to get rid of its nuclear weapons. That is right and we welcome the progress that is being made, including on getting rid of nuclear weapons in the Ukraine. But we need to know—I regret that the Secretary of State did not find time to deal with these issues—the United Kingdom's policy on nuclear weapons. In the general election campaign, the Government thought it enough to announce that they would build a fourth Trident submarine. That did not even help them electorally, as the presence here of my hon. Friend the Member for Barrow and Furness (Mr. Hutton) confirms.

Four submarines are not a defence policy, nationally or internationally. The Government must think through, and present to Parliament, their views on what is an appropriate defence policy for Britian in a post-cold-war period. They must tell Parliament who is the potential enemy, what is the best way of defending the country against such an enemy, what is the role of our armed forces and what is the role of NATO.

Britain spends large amounts on men, weapons and equipment and it is right for us to spend whatever sums are required. But if Parliament is to authorise that expenditure, Parliament has the right to have clearly explained to it the objectives of that expenditure, in particular what our defence aims are and how they are to be achieved. Five years from now, and countless billions of expenditure later, will this country have what it does not have now—a defence policy? Or will it simply have an ill thought out defence budget which the Government will continue to pretend is the substitute for a defence policy?

Such questions are being asked in your city, Madam Deputy Speaker. What will be the Government's policy at home on the redeployment of defence industries and the hundreds of thousands of men and women employed in them? There is not a word on that subject in the Gracious Speech. How many of those men and women will still be employed in defence industries?

Will Vickers Shipbuilding and Engineering Limited, Barrow, have any future workload as the Trident series approaches completion, or will thousands more have been made redundant there? During the election period I met the management of VSEL and was told that even on a projected four-Trident submarine programme, thousands more redundancies were expected in the relatively near future. What future is there for that shipyard, the whole workload of which is tied to the Trident programme? Will thousands more be made redundant there? Will the yard be doomed to closure ? There are great fears in Barrow

[Mr. Kaufman]

that the yard will not survive the decade. My hon. Friend the Member for Barrow and Furness rightly drew attention to those concerns in his constituency in his excellent maiden speech on Wednesday. What will have happened to the defence complex around Bristol, where many thousands of defence workers are deeply concerned about their future?

Mr. John Bowis (Battersea): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Kaufman: If the hon. Gentleman will allow me to complete this passage, I shall give way in a moment.

Will the Government have squared the circle and satisfied the expectations of Rosyth and Devonport for Trident refitting? Is there a future for Devonport dockyard? Workers in Plymouth are very worried about that, as the Secretary of State must know. The Government have a profound responsibility towards our defence workers and they must promise them a future in which their skills will both keep them in employment and continue to benefit the nation. During the general election campaign we said that we would set up a defence diversification agency and work with industry and others on that. The management of Devonport dockyard, for example, greatly welcomed that proposal. However, that is not to be, so the Government have a great obligation to make it clear to the many thousands of defence workers who will undoubtedly lose their jobs as a result of technological change and disarmament negotiations what their future is to be. The most recent defence White Paper specifically washed its hands of that problem. The Government cannot continue to wash their hands of the problem.

Mr. Bowis: It is fascinating to hear the Labour party's defence policy evolving. During the election campaign it reached the stage of a fourth but unarmed submarine at Barrow—a floating holiday submarine. The right hon. Gentleman has not yet reached the stage of saying what specific orders he would bring to that shipyard to keep jobs for the people about whom he claims to be concerned.

Mr. Kaufman: Clearly, the hon. Gentleman did not follow what was said during the election campaign. To enlighten him I shall send him a copy of the speech that I made on 17 March, which dealt fully with those matters. If the hon. Gentleman then has further problems, I should be glad to discuss them with him and enlighten him further.

What role will the Government play in international disarmament? Will they have accepted that Britain must be involved in eight-power negotiations to reduce stocks of strategic nuclear weapons? The Gracious Speech refers to action to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. What is that action to be? Five years from now, how many more nuclear powers will there be? Will the Government make it clear to countries seeking to acquire nuclear weapons that acquisition by them of such weapons is not acceptable? Will the non-proliferation treaty have been strengthened to warn off those and other countries?

Will there be strengthened inspection and intrusion procedures, as the Labour party recommends? Will there be strengthened sanctions against proliferation? Will there be an international ban on the export of all nuclear materials, including so-called peaceful nuclear materials, to countries that fail to sign the non-proliferation treaty? We certainly recommend that. Will this country's hands be clean? They were certainly not clean in the case of Iraq.

Will action have been taken to curb the sale of conventional weapons which, as we saw in the Gulf war, can be terrifying lethal? Will there be a ban on arms sales to countries with poor human rights records? We shall press for such a ban. What about arms sales to the middle east? At present, apart from co-operation on sanctions against Iraq, the Government ban arms sales only to Israel. I shall support that ban on Israel provided that it is part of a general ban throughout the middle east, with exceptions to be specifically justified and explained.

Before the Gulf crisis, I warned repeatedly from the Dispatch Box of the danger of a war in the middle east. That danger remains, even if one instigator has been quarantined. Will peace prevail, however uneasily, in that strife-torn region, or shall we, in five years time, be conducting an inquest into the causes and outcome of yet another needless and lethal conflict in that region? Such a conflict would undoubtedly involve missiles, might well involve chemical weapons and could possibly involve nuclear weapons. It could be a regional conflict which nevertheless drags in the rest of the world, as the Gulf war did. What action are the Government taking to seek to prevent such a war?

Will there have been a settlement of the Palestinian issue or will the intifada be in its second decade? What action will the Government take to assist the Madrid process? The hon. Member for Bexleyheath (Mr. Townsend) intervened in the Secretary of State's speech to say that the Government should visit Cyprus. It is about time that that happened because there has been no Government visit to Cyprus in 13 years and the Cypriots are resentful of the fact that the Government have not sent a senior Minister to visit them there. The Foreign Secretary referred to the issue, but the question is how we deal with the division of Cyprus. I welcome the Foreign Secretary's visit to Turkey and hope that he pressed the Turks strongly not only on Cyprus but on the subject of the Kurds, because the solution to the Kurdish problem lies far more in Turkey than even in Iraq. When the Foreign Secretary was discussing Cyprus with the Turkish Government, did he make it clear that the continued presence of Turkish troops on Cypriot soil, against the will of the sovereign Government of Cyprus, is unacceptable and against international law? In discussing Cyprus today, the Secretary of State said that he looks forward to two regional governments on the island as equal partners. It is important that the Government make it clear, so that there can be no misunderstanding, that if there are to be two regional governments in Cyprus they must be within a united Cyprus under one Government and one president.

Mr. Hurd: The right hon. Gentleman is correct. That is why I said, before talking about two regional governments, that there should be one Cyprus.

Mr. Kaufman: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for clarifying that. As he knows, what we say about those matters is studied intensely in Cyprus. It must be made clear—it is a possibility that has been mooted

—that a two-state solution to the problem of Cyprus is absolutely unacceptable and will be tolerated neither by the Government nor by the House.

Basic principles of international law and territorial integrity are at stake in Cyprus and a solution covering the rights of both communities is essential. My hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Mrs. Roche) rightly drew attention to that issue yesterday in her eloquent maiden speech.

The Gracious Speech fails to mention Kashmir and I am sorry that, although the Conservative party managed to cram a mention of the matter into its election manifesto because it was worried about one or two marginal seats, the Secretary of State has not spoken of it today. Five years from now, will Kashmiris still be dying, losing their homes and livelihoods, in that tragic conflict? Kashmiris of all religions—Muslim, Hindu and Buddhist—are affected. Will young Indian and Pakistani service men still be losing their lives pointlessly and tragically? I hope that the Government will explain what action they propose to take to help to bring about a solution, because they mooted the possibility of such a solution in their election manifesto.

Will a solution have at last been found to the problem of the western Sahara? A plebiscite should have been held there three months ago. Britain is seeking to facilitate such a plebiscite. Will the Government take the initiative in the United Nations Security Council to hasten such a plebiscite?

The Secretary of State referred to Hong Kong. Five years from now, British rule in Hong Kong will have less than two months to go. The Secretary of State referred to what the Gracious Speech said about political development in the territory, but gave the House no hint of what the Government have in mind.

What will the political condition of Hong Kong be on the eve of its becoming a special administrative region of the People's Republic of China? Will the number of directly elected members of the LegCo have been increased beyond the total at present envisaged? Will the electorates of the functional constituencies have been widened to include all the members of the relevant organisations? That would be a means of giving the vote to hundreds of thousands more people in Hong Kong. Will the nominated members be far more representative of political opinion in the colony than they are now? Will directly elected members of the Legislative Council be serving on the Executive Council? We believe that they certainly should, and that the problem requires an urgent approach.

Will the Executive be more directly answerable to the Legislative Council? Will the governor make himself available to answer questions in the Legislative Council, as is being requested? If so, I hope that he will be a good deal more forthcoming than he was when he answered questions in the House. What exactly do the Government have in mind for the political development of Hong Kong? Those questions are being asked.

The Gracious Speech refers to one of the most important roles that the Government will play this year, as president of the European Community. What sort of Community do the Government envisage five years from now? How large do the Government expect that Community to be? Will the Government support not only the membership of additional countries named both by the Prime Minister on Wednesday and by the Foreign Secretary today, but the application of Cyprus? There is no reason why that application should not be proceeded with.

Do the Government accept that, in principle, every country in Europe, including the former Soviet republics, should be eligible for membership of the European Community, provided that they fulfil the necessary criteria of economic viability and political stability under proper democratic systems?

Mr. Tony Banks: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend, who grabbed my attention forcibly as I was about to go and make a telephone call. On the question that he has just posed about the republics of the former Soviet Union, it could be argued that if we carry that policy right through, Europe will be extended to within a few miles of the United States. I suppose that it could go further and further, until it reaches Australia and New Zealand. Does my right hon. Friend not have a definition of Europe? Surely it cannot extend to Asian republics in the former Soviet Union?

Mr. Kaufman: My hon. Friend has drawn attention to the problem posed by the fact that the Russian federation, the capital of which is Moscow and which includes St. Petersburg, extends to the Aleutian islands. It is a European country with the overwhelming majority of its population in Europe. In principle, I would certainly support the membership of such a country in the Community, provided that all the criteria to which I referred were fulfilled. I would not say that Asian countries should be included as we are talking about a European Community. Countries that are solely in Asia should not be included. The Foreign Secretary spoke about including Turkey in the European Community, although only a minute fraction of Turkey is in the continent of Europe, but provided that Turkey gets out of Cyprus and fulfils the human rights criteria to which we attach importance, I would welcome Turkey's membership of the European Community.

Following the 1996 review, will the Government have accepted the central bank and the single currency? Do the Government have a five-year vision for the Community, as distinct from a six-month vision which they will outline to us in the debate on the Maastricht treaty? The Government have accepted a foreign policy role for the European Community, but what sort of foreign policy do they believe appropriate?

The Government have accepted a defence identity for the European Community. The Labour party believes that they were wrong to do so, but, if they have accepted that, they have an obligation to the House to spell out their concept of the European defence role. We have not heard a hint about that subject today.

What about the aid role of the European Community? What of the Government's aid role? The Gracious Speech refers to maintaining a substantial aid programme to reduce poverty in developing countries, but the Government have reduced this country's aid programme by a half. Do the Government intend to end that decline? Do they intend to accept the United Nations target of aid as 0·7 per cent. of gross national product? What is the Government's aid policy, as distinct from their aid slogan? Do they accept that a special aid programme for South Africa will be necessary when a multiracial Government take office there?

As I listened to Her Majesty deliver the Gracious Speech on Wednesday, I lamented the lost opportunities. I compared the negativism of that speech with the abundance of positive proposals for arms control,

[Mr. Kaufman]

non-proliferation, defence diversification, the resolution of regional conflicts, Europe and aid, which would have been contained in a Labour Government's Queen's Speech. That speech was not to be.

I hope that the Government, with their narrow majority and narrow base of popular support, will be more responsive to the House than they were in the previous Parliament. In this Parliament, a strengthened parliamentary Labour party will fight with even more determination for the ideals to which we are dedicated: the combating of hunger and deprivation, and the pursuit of world peace.

10.47 am

Mr. David Howell (Guildford): May I add my words of congratulation to you, Madam Deputy Speaker, on your appointment to a place of authority in the House, which is very welcome to many of us.

Given that our aims in foreign policy are, in the words of the prayer said each day,

"saving health among all nations",

and in the words of the Foreign Secretary today, primarily the security and prosperity of Europe, the Gracious Speech is welcome. It refers to three vital means of securing that prosperity and stability in Europe.

The first and, I believe for the immediate future, by far the most important, is the undertaking to help Russia—and it will be more than Russia—to dismantle its surplus nuclear weapons. There is no greater danger facing world order and the security of European nations than the awful prospect of either strategic nuclear warheads or the vastly greater number of tactical nuclear warheads—the storage of which is not nearly as organised as it should be—getting into the hands of people who do not accept the code of reasoning that might restrain them from using such weapons. That is a likely prospect.

I think that, some months ago, the Foreign Secretary assured us that, after a visit to Moscow, he believed that the strategic weapons were under proper control and the codes were in the hands of the high command of the Russian part of the Commonwealth of Independent States. But evidence suggests that the control of the thousands upon thousands of tactical nuclear warheads is not so well secured.

There remains a colossal danger, indeed likelihood, that weapons and—which is more sinister—people with the techniques and technology to assemble those weapons, have moved into the employ of states in the middle east and elsewhere. Such people are ready to put the weapons together and use them on impulse or whim, without reason, as we saw the impulse of Saddam Hussein turn against Kuwait the year before last. That is a vital matter. It would be interesting—perhaps not in speeches now, but later—to hear how we and our allies are to act more effectively to ensure that such weapons are brought under control and do not fall into the hands of mad dictators and alien despots.

The second issue that directly affects the security of Europe and which my right hon. Friend mentioned is Yugoslavia. The Gracious Speech expresses the pious hope that a peaceful settlement can be obtained. I fear that that looks less and less likely as the days go by. My own view is that the well-meaning policy of the European Community—it should certainly be supported in respect of the monitors—which involved the premature recognition of Bosnia has been a catastrophe and has led, as was widely predicted, to a vast increase in the bloodshed. The former Select Committee on Foreign Affairs said before the recent election that premature recognition would lead to the bloody dismemberment of Bosnia. Now that that has happened, our task is the new and horrific one of somehow preventing the killing fields of Bosnia from turning into a full-scale Balkan war—as well it may unless we are somehow able by diplomatic, economic or ultimately military means to curb the activities of the Serbian official army and forces and of the irregular army and forces that roam the whole area killing at will.

The third major task for Europe outlined in the Gracious Speech is the welcome commitment to promoting and developing democracy in eastern Europe. That is going to be difficult; it is by no means assured that the eastern European countries—Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Poland, to take the leading three—will make it all the way to free, pluralist societies. It will be a tough fight, and we must certainly help them all the way and must promote democracy there and elsewhere in the world wherever we can.

It is on these three issues that we should concentrate when thinking about our aims, as the Foreign Secretary put them, of European security and prosperity, and it is against this background that I come to the other issue in the Gracious Speech, which will take up more time of this House but which may prove to be far less important: the decision to put a Bill before the House—it is already printed—to give lawful expression to the Maastricht treaty.

As time goes by, and even since we fought the election, it appears that the aims of the treaty and the discussions surrounding it are less and less relevant to the Europe that we now contemplate. Since the treaty was signed, all the doubts that some of us sensed would arise in Germany have come to the fore. The Germans are asking why they did not have a debate like the British had. They are discovering that they do not like some of the things to which they joined up—they do not want to get rid of the deutschmark, for instance.

There are intense debates in France, where there are the beginnings of a political earthquake. The Spaniards are far less happy now that they realise they will not get all the regional cash for which they had hoped. The Italians are in political chaos. The Dutch are beginning to have doubts and the Danish do not like the whole idea. The Irish, because of their abortion problems, are beginning to wonder why they signed. All in all, we have to ask whether the high aims and rhetoric in the preamble to the Maastricht treaty really fit well with the priorities that I have just mentioned, to do with furthering the stability of Europe.

Before the election, the former Foreign Affairs Committee was in the midst of a study of the implications of the Maastricht treaty, comparing them with some of the implications of the Single European Act. We only got as far as asking a series of questions. I hope that there will now be an opportunity to pursue some of those issues. I also hope that it will be possible to set up the Select Committees again quickly, within 30 days. I have heard it suggested that the process will be delayed until the Opposition leadership election in July, which may well be after the House has risen.

There is absolutely no reason why that leadership election should delay the setting up of all the Committees. It may create one or two marginal problems which will have to be sorted out in the autumn. If the Committees are not set up within 30 days, we will have to assume that there are other motives at work. I trust that what I have said will be taken to heart by the usual channels and by the powers that be in the major political parties.

Let us contemplate what the House will be asked to do when we come to approve the European Communities (Amendment) Bill, which will turn parts of the Maastricht treaty into the law of this land. If my right hon. Friends are to persuade us to give the Bill a green light, they must first establish that they recognise that Maastricht is not just a milestone on some inevitable, irrevocable, irreversible advance towards the full political union and monetary union of a new integrated European state. We neither like nor want that language.

Instead, we want it to be recognised, as I believe my right hon. Friends did recognise at Maastricht, that this is a turning point, an opportunity to begin the development of Europe in a new and better direction than the one articulated by many of the great enthusiasts for European integration in its fullest sense. If we are to be told that Maastricht is a turning point on the way to a more modern kind of Europe, that will be much more welcome.

All this will be more convincing if my right hon. Friends can explain to us how they will give substance to the idea of subsidiarity, that unhappy and rather unEnglish word which is nevertheless of great importance, and which makes a rather vague appearance in article 3B of the treaty. I think that the time may have come not merely to talk in general terms about subsidiarity but to set out a list of the powers that we believe should be repatriated from the Community institutions and the Commission to the nation states.

My former Cabinet colleague, Sir Leon Brittan, now an outstanding Commissioner and an effective force in Brussels, has recently been airing his thoughts about such possibilities—not merely that subsidiarity means that further powers should not go to the centre but that powers should be returned from the centre. It will be important to begin compiling a list of those powers which are overdue for repatriation to the nation states, to remind ourselves that the Europe that we want in future is the result not merely of a process of ever greater centralisation but of a balance between the powers of the ancient nation states and the Community institutions which are and should be our servants.

Secondly, my right hon. Friends will need to show that they do not accept, any more than I suspect the rest of the House accepts, the irreversible road to European political and monetary union. Thanks to the enormous skill of the Foreign Secretary and the Prime Minister, this country succeeded in obtaining a version of the treaty which enables us to call a halt to European monetary union. My own view is that the full monetary union—a single currency running from Palermo to Glasgow, from Lisbon to Warsaw or Berlin—will never occur. The more one hears the debate in Germany, the more likely it seems that EMU in that form will never happen.

Fortunately we are not committed to this fantasy—to this castle in the air of European monetary union—and it is interesting to note that other European countries are showing equal reluctance. So let us have a clear view from my right hon. Friends on this matter.

Thirdly, we will need strong reassurance about accountability for the powers given to the Community's institutions and to the new European union institutions, the so-called pillars around the main trunk of the European Community which were set up by the Maastricht treaty. The other day, the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing), who chairs the European Legislation Scrutiny Committee, wrote an excellent article in the *New European* rightly pointing out that, whether we like it or not, the complexities of trying to keep track and account of the new powers as exercised under the Maastricht treaty will be vastly greater even than those the House now faces trying to stay ahead of the European Community and European Parliament and all the directives and regulations emanating from them.

We shall need to know a good deal more about the part that accountability will play in these new powers. It is not enough to say that the intergovernmental processes under the Maastricht treaty will all involve Ministers who of course are accountable to this House. All sorts of new undertakings and new commitments of a semi-collective kind will be given, and it is fair and right that the House should have increased opportunities, which we shall have to devise, to hold to account and keep track of the activities that are pursued within the European union pillars.

The conference of Parliaments proposed in the Maastricht treaty will have to be approached with vigour and in a way that preserves the position of the national Parliaments. It must not lead to us all being submerged in party groups across frontiers, with the whole exercise hijacked and controlled by the Commission or the authorities of the European Parliament.

It being Eleven o'clock, MADAM SPEAKER *interrupted the proceedings, pursuant to Standing Order No. 11 (Friday sittings).*

Counter-terrorism

11 am

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): With permission, Madam Speaker, I should like to make a statement about the division of responsibilities for intelligence work between the Metropolitan police special branch and the Security Service.

As the House will be aware, the Metropolitan police special branch at present has the lead responsibility for the acquisition, processing and use of intelligence against Irish republican terrorism in Great Britain. The Security Service has the lead responsibility for intelligence work against all other forms of terrorism in Great Britain, including Irish loyalist and international terrorism, and against Irish republican terrorism overseas. The Security Service also contributes now to the acquisition and assessment of intelligence against Irish republican terrorism in Great Britain and in this field, as in others, already works very closely with the police service.

The Government have now decided that the lead responsibility for intelligence work against Irish republican terrorism in Great Britain should pass from the Metropolitan police special branch to the Security Service. This will bring the arrangements broadly into line with those that already exist for other forms of terrorism. The purpose of this change is to enable the Security Service to use to the full the skills and expertise which it has developed over the years in its work on counter-terrorism. I wish to emphasise that under the new arrangements the Metropolitan police special branch will continue to play an indispensable part in intelligence work against Irish republican groups. The substantial experience and expertise that it has developed will not be lost, and it will continue to work in the closest co-operation with the Security Service.

Intelligence is a key part of the action being taken against Irish republican terrorism, but it is only a part. Operations on a wider basis, including the collection of evidence and the arrest and prosecution of those suspected of terrorist offences, are plainly essential in dealing with terrorism. This wider responsibility for protecting the public against the threat of terrorism, and for the investigation of terrorist offences, must rest with the police service. It will continue to do so under the new arrangements that I have described.

Since 1990, the effectiveness of police arrangements against terrorism has been significantly enhanced by the appointment of the Commander of the Metropolitan police anti-terrorist branch as national co-ordinator of police counter-terrorist investigations, and by the creation of the Association of Chief Police Officers' advisory group headed by a very senior officer of the Metropolitan police, the assistant commissioner for specialist operations.

The transfer of the lead responsibility for intelligence work from the Metropolitan police special branch to the Security Service does not in any way affect the roles of the national co-ordinator or the advisory group. It does not affect the responsibility of individual chief officers for policing their areas and for the work done by police special branches outside London. It is only in the lead responsibility for the intelligence work that a change is being made.

The decision that I have announced today does not affect in any way the accountability of the police and security services. Both the Metropolitan police and the Security Service are accountable, through me, to Parliament. The Metropolitan police is accountable through the Commissioner to me as police authority and the Security Service is accountable through its director general to me under the Security Service Act 1989.

The need for effective action against terrorism speaks for itself. It calls for the best use of all the skills and experience available within the law to the Government. The decision that I have announced is designed to strengthen still further the effective intelligence work already being done against Irish republican terrorism in Great Britain, a task in which both the Security Service and the police have vital roles to play. The Government will keep these arrangements under review and where they can be improved still further, we shall take the necessary action.

Mr. Barry Sheerman (Huddersfield): I start by congratulating the right hon. and learned Gentleman on his appointment as Home Secretary. However, he has made a rather inauspicious beginning by making a statement of this importance to a thinly attended House on a Friday. The House takes the issue very seriously. As an incoming Home Secretary, he has a unique opportunity to take a fresh approach to an issue of enormous public concern, such as the fight against terrorism. He also has a historic opportunity to deal with a matter of profound constitutional importance—the accountability of the security services.

We have argued for many years for greater parliamentary scrutiny of the work of the security services and our preferred method of achieving that is by the establishment of an Intelligence Select Committee comprising senior Privy Councillors. The issues have taken on greater significance now that MI5 is to be given the lead role in fighting terrorism. We have many concerns about MI5 being given that role. As the House knows, Sir Christopher Curwen, the former head of MI6, undertook two reviews of this important area in 1990 and in 1991. On both occasions, he concluded that it would not be appropriate for the security services to be given more than a strictly limited and subordinate role. Why has the Home Secretary chosen to ignore that advice?

There will be real problems if MI5 takes on the lead role. There is the central issue of accountability to which I have referred. In addition, the Home Secretary knows that MI5 has no operational function; it has no power of arrest. As we know to our cost, it does not have experience of preparing evidence that will stand up in court. There are also issues about immunity from prosecution and I hope that the Home Secretary will deal with those in his response. For example, would MI5 agents active in the IRA be given immunity from prosecution? There are also dangers in terrorism being classed as a political crime. It should not be given such status. The cold-blooded killing of innocent people should be treated as the abominable crime it is. Does the Home Secretary agree?

We fear that there will be difficulties because of the type of administrative structure that we understand is to be established. If there is to be a bureaucratic committee to which all leads would be reported, will that not involve time wasting and the possible loss of lives because of delay?

There are alternative ways to take a greater initiative against terrorism. There is much greater merit in providing the police with a national intelligence service, with its own operational arm. That not only would allow a sharper focus for counter-terrorist work, but would be within a police structure that is tried and tested.

The Opposition have repeatedly called for all-party talks on these issues. In the past few days, the Home Secretary received a letter from my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) repeating that call so that, on cross-party lines, we could develop the most effective strategy against terrorism. I am disappointed that, so far, the Government have declined to accept that offer.

This new Parliament has a very different House of Commons, in which there will be renewed assertion of parliamentary power. The Home Secretary's failure to announce a proper system of parliamentary scrutiny of the security services in parallel with the important changes that he has announced will be widely resented. If the citizens charter means anything, surely the Home Secretary should also announce the introduction of a freedom of information Act and parliamentary scrutiny of the security services. We wait to hear what he intends to do about our concerns. People have a right to know what is being done by the state in their name.

Hon. Members are united in wanting to do all in our power to attack the evil men and women of terror. A restructuring of our efforts is timely, but we are not convinced that the method proposed by the Government is the right way forward in a modern democratic state.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. Before the Home Secretary replies, I remind the House that statements do not form a debate. I am looking for pertinent questions to the Home Secretary and pertinent and short answers from him, which I am sure we shall get.

Mr. Clarke: I thank the hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman) for his good wishes on my appointment. It is some years since he and I faced each other across the Dispatch Box on other matters. I look forward to his contributions to our debates on home affairs.

I acknowledge and accept that accountability for the Security Service is an important part of our concerns in this Parliament. I think that we have greatly improved the openness of the operation of the security services and made them more accountable. The operation of the Security Service Act 1989 has changed these matters very much in recent years. There is now a commissioner who produces an annual report to Parliament. There is a source of redress for those who have complaints against the Security Service and access to a tribunal. The service is accountable, through me, to the House.

The hon. Member for Huddersfield asked why we made the key change, which is to transfer the lead responsibility for intelligence gathering against Irish republican activity in this country. We always keep these matters under review. The issue was examined in the reports that the hon. Gentleman described, and it was examined again in a more recent report.

For reasons that everyone will understand, we are now in a position to transfer some resource within the Security Service and enhance our intelligence-gathering efforts. It was a good moment to consider which service should have the lead responsibility. Both the Security Service and the special branch of the Metropolitan police will continue to make a substantial effort. They will work together as they always have. Giving the lead to the Security Service will get the best out of both. It is putting the lead in the hands of those whose speciality is the collection and use of intelligence of this sort.

As the hon. Member for Huddersfield said, operational matters must remain with the police. They are the people who collect evidence, prepare prosecutions and bring those responsible for these matters to justice, and they will continue to be so. There need be no conflict, and there will be no conflict, between intelligence gathering and operations. Over the years, the police and the Security Service have worked together on many matters and have successfully brought to justice those who have been damaging to the security of this country.

It is only history that gives the police the lead responsibility for Irish republican terrorism. It is an accident of history that in the 19th century they were given that lead at the time of the Fenian outrages. The Security Service has always had the lead, for example, for loyalist terrorist activity in this country. Starting from scratch, I think that the arrangements today are those which would always have been in place.

I agree that what is done by the Security Service and the police must be within the law. I stress that both services will act within the law. I regard the activities of terrorist gangs in this country as crime. It is important that we enhance our efforts all the time against that crime and against those criminals and bring them to justice. I think that the arrangements that we are proposing will help to improve our efforts.

I am always happy to have talks with the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) or the Opposition team on these matters. Of course, those talks will not involve the process of negotiation about the prevention of terrorism Act, but I hope that the Opposition in this new Parliament will take the opportunity to shift their ground. Otherwise, I agree that both sides of the House should co-operate closely when the overriding public need is at all times to strengthen our efforts against terrorism and protect the public against it.

Mr. Peter Brooke (City of London and Westminster, South): Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that, with changes as far-reaching and significant as those that he has announced, proof will be some time in the making? Does he agree also that, in matters of this sort where cross-agency activities are involved, the quality of the personal relations in the cross-agency activities is of extreme importance? Will my right hon. and learned Friend concentrate on the quality of those relationships?

Mr. Clarke: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend. He is right, because intelligence work is, of its nature, a slow and steady process. The effect of the increased effort that we are making in this area will perhaps take some years to show. This is a steady process of frustrating would-be terrorist activity and bringing to justice on occasions those who can be caught and brought before the courts.

I agree that, in the end, everything depends crucially on the personal relationships between all those involved in every aspect of operations against the IRA. I have had meetings on this subject with Mrs. Rimington of the Security Service, with the Commissioner of Police of the

[Mr. Clarke]

Metropolis and the president of the Association of Chief Police Officers. I have been assured by them all that the relationships will remain close. I know that they are determined to ensure that both organisations work together in harmony, disclosing to each other all that they are doing, so as to get the maximum out of their respective efforts.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): May I add my felicitations and those of my right hon. and hon. Friends to the new Home Secretary on his appointment? If the right hon. and learned Gentleman intends to have cross-party co-operation on these matters, which my colleagues would very much welcome, will he consider having discussions with Opposition parties before making such major changes, especially when they are made against the advice that has been openly proffered, and against a background in which the Metropolitan police have made it plain that they think that these changes are unwise? Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman say what further arrangements he has for strengthening the accountability of himself for the security services to the House?

Mr. Clarke: I have said that I am happy to have talks with the Opposition. This is an area in which I think we should seek to achieve the maximum all-party agreement on our efforts. I am not sure that the advice that the hon. Gentleman is talking about has been openly offered. I keep reading about some of it in the newspapers, and certainly reports have been prepared internally for me.

As I say, I have had discussions with the Commissioner, the president of ACPO and the leader of the Security Service. I think that there comes a point when one cannot have the widest possible discussions about how we shall organise intelligence gathering against Irish republicans in this country. I think that everybody probably accepts that. I look forward to the hon. Gentleman's contribution and to talks with him on these matters. I thank him for his congratulations on my appointment, but I hope that he does not expect me to come to him every time I have a decision to take in this area.

Sir John Wheeler (Westminster, North): My right hon. and learned Friend makes it clear that his statement means that the Security Service is responsible for the lead in intelligence gathering. He must know that I particularly welcome that development and believe that it is right at this time. I welcome my right hon. and learned Friend's confirmation that he remains accountable to the House for the conduct of the Security Service. Will he confirm that these arrangements are no reflection upon the excellent work of the special branch services of the police system in this country, and especially of the special branch of the Metropolitan police, and that there is no question of members of the Security Service holding the office of constable and thus investigating crime directly?

Mr. Clarke: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his welcome for the decision and for accurately realising that we are talking about the lead in what will be a joint activity by the Security Service and the police. I underline what my hon. Friend said about the successes that have been achieved under the leadership of the special branch of the Metropolitan police. The public are not always aware, when activities are frustrated and do not occur, that successes have been achieved. As we all know, the police have been making progress recently in investigations both of bombings in London and shootings in Derby. Arrests have been made of suspects and those investigations are proceeding further. So the police have been achieving successes, and the Metropolitan police will continue with at least as much work in this area as it has in the past.

We simply have the opportunity to switch more resource within the security services into this key area of Irish republican terrorism in this country. It was an obvious moment to review the lead responsibility for that, and we have brought that responsibility for republican terrorism into line with that which has always prevailed for loyalist terrorism and international terrorism in this country.

Mr. Stuart Bell (Middlesbrough): The Secretary of State will accept that terrorism and the killing of innocent people do not resolve political situations; they simply leave orphans and widows. Does he accept that, although his statement deals with terrorism in this country, there should be absolute interfacing with the security services in Northern Ireland and in the Republic of Ireland? Will he note that the Republic of Ireland has made important strides recently in finding all types of arms caches throughout the country? I welcome the move that the Secretary of State has outlined today if it leads to an effective attack on terrorism, because terrorism does not resolve political problems. As I said, it simply leaves widows and orphans.

Mr. Clarke: I agree with the hon. Gentleman. Terrorism contributes nothing to the resolution of any political problems. Terrorism in this country is organised crime of a completely unhelpful and extremely damaging kind which often has tragic consequences. It is therefore important that all the work on the mainland of Britain, in Ulster and in the Republic of Ireland is co-ordinated to a certain extent and that all the authorities co-operate as they properly should in action against the joint threat which they all face from the Provisional IRA. I am sure that proper contacts will be maintained and will not be affected in any way by the announcement today.

Mr. Ivan Lawrence (Burton): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that Conservative Members also welcome his appointment as Home Secretary? We especially welcome this early manifestation of the Government's determination in this new Parliament to combat terrorism. It is obviously sensible that the strengths of the Security Service should be more directly harnessed in the attack on terrorism and that some of the intolerable burden on the shoulders of the Metropolitan police should be relieved.

Will my right hon. and learned Friend also be aware that there is strong feeling among Conservative Members and, perhaps, throughout the House that he should have our support in combating the apparent determination of the European Commission to dismantle the barrier to international terrorism which we now have?

Mr. Clarke: I am grateful to my hon. and learned Friend for his welcoming of my appointment, and I look forward to hearing even more frequently his contributions on these subjects in the House during my spell as Home Secretary. I am also grateful for his welcoming the

decision. It is not the case that the burden will be lifted from the Metropolitan police. I anticipate that, if anything, it will be involved in more intelligence work, as well as in all its operational activities against people in particular instances. It will have extra effort from the Security Service combined with its efforts. I believe that we shall get the best out of both services under the new lead responsibilities we have established.

We cannot lessen the effort in any way until we have increased the protection of the public against terrorist outrages. I will certainly bring home to my colleagues in our partner Governments in the European Community that we cannot contemplate any weakening of our protection against terrorism.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): When the former Chairman of the Home Affairs Select Committee, the hon. Member for Westminster, North (Sir J. Wheeler), said that the Home Secretary was responsible to the House for the conduct of the security services, was he not absolutely wrong? That is what the argument is all about.

If the Government resist the formation of a Security Services Select Committee, is there not a compromise position? It is that the accounting officers for each of the security services give evidence on financial matters of accountability to the Public Accounts Committee in private session, and that the Committee does not produce reports. At least within that system, there would be an element of accountability.

If the Government are not prepared to go even that far, surely the accounting officers of the various departments could meet the Chairman and a Deputy Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee so that there would be at least some element of scrutiny by the House, as against by the Executive uniquely.

Mr. Clarke: This Government have steadily increased the openness of the Security Service during the past 10 years, and we have made a significant stride in putting it on a statutory basis by establishing a commissioner, establishing the tribunal and doing the other things to which I referred. We are open to argument, and the hon. Gentleman has a perfect opportunity in today's debate to put forward his arguments on these matters if he wishes, as we are about to put the SIS on a statutory basis as well.

The Home Secretary is accountable to the House for a Security Service that operates within the law. In all the arguments on these matters, we must all appreciate, as the vast bulk of the public do, that it is not possible to acccount in detail for operational activities. We must have a proper Security Service which operates within the law and is accountable to Parliament, but we must not introduce mechanisms that damage its effectiveness in targeting terrorist organisations.

Mr. Peter Bottomley (Eltham): Does my right hon. and learned Friend accept that what he has announced is a change in the priorities of intelligence gathering which should not be looked on as a massive change in the attack of terrorism? Will he also accept that the way in which the Metropolitan police published the minutes, which appear to have been leaked, showed that much of what is looked on as "spookery" is just the plain, simple pursuit of information, which is an essential part of the work of the police and the other security services in tackling some of the criminal violence that people suffer? Will he also agree that the people who will gain most from improved effectiveness will be the Irish nationalists, who suffer from republican terrorism just as much as anyone else?

Mr. Clarke: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I agree that the word "intelligence" gives this all a rather more sinister ring that it should have. We are talking about a process of investigation in which more is discovered about the membership, the plans, the intentions and the movements of those who propose to engage in terrorist activity. It is a skilled and specialist activity which has been well carried out by the special branch.

As a result of political changes, there is greater opportunity for the Security Service to put more of its resources into that acitivity. The activity can be organised to ensure that both services work together to the best effect. It is an important part, although one part only, of what we must ensure, which is to reduce the level of terrorist activity in this country. That is as important to the nationalists in Ireland as it is to every member of the public throughout the United Kingdom.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Did the Metropolitan police agree willingly with the switch in lead responsibility?

Mr. Clarke: The Metropolitan police have had discussions with me about the matter. I have met the Commissioner a number of times—I think twice on this matter specifically—and the president of ACPO. I have also had discussions with the Security Service, and I had an up-to-date report before me in the Home Office. All of them are agreed that they have to work together and all of them are agreed that the links between intelligence and operational matters must be smooth all the way through. All have undertaken to ensure that they can continue the excellent collaboration which they have always had.

I am sure that the change and statements made today will be accepted by everyone involved. They bring the responsibilities for republican terrorism in line with the ones we have had for years on loyalist terrorism and international terrorism. I know of no difficulty that has occurred on that front for either the police or the security services.

Mr. Cyril D. Townsend (Bexleyheath): Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that, if there were a Committee of the House to examine the security services, that Committee would feel frustrated from day one by the restrictions imposed on it and by the basic fact that it would not be allowed to go into operational matters?

Bearing in mind the fact that there will be concern in the Metropolitan police special branch about this important announcement, will my right hon. and learned Friend make it clear that there will be no reduction in either manpower or financial resources for that organisation?

Mr. Clarke: I did not directly answer the previous question. I should have underlined the fact that those in the Security Service will not have the powers of a constable and will not be engaged in operational matters. All the powers that the police use when they bring people to justice are exercisable only by the police, and the police are solely responsible for that side of the activity.

In an answer a few moments ago, I also said that the statement does not imply any reduction in the activity of

[Mr. Clarke]

the Metropolitan police special branch, in the activity of special branches throughout the country or in the resources available to them in the fight against terrorism.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Does the Home Secretary accept that there have been some monstrous miscarriages of justice as a result of the operation of the prevention of terrorism Act, such as that of the Guildford Four? What assurances can he give us that undercover operations by the security services will not in themselves lead to further serious miscarriages of justice because of the lack of accountability of those services? Does the statement represent a move away from a political solution to the sadness of the conflict in Ireland, or will the Government continue to try to pursue a political settlement to bring peace to that country?

Mr. Clarke: I will remind myself of the facts of the unhappy miscarriage of justice in the Guildford case. I do not recollect that it concerned the activities of the Security Service or the prevention of terrorism Act.

Mr. Corbyn: Paul Hill was arrested under the Act.

Mr. Clarke: He may well have been arrested under it, but it was not a cause of the miscarriage of justice in that case. The prevention of terrorism Act is absolutely essential to frustrate terrorist activity in this country and to give proper protection to the public and, in the aftermath of the general election, I hope that the Opposition will move urgently to reconsider their position on that Act.

I agree that, in dealing with the affairs of Ireland, we must continue to have political discussions, and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State is engaged in taking those discussions forward at this very moment. Terrorist activities by the Provisional IRA on mainland Britain and in Ireland have no useful effect on the political process—indeed, they put back the prospects of a settlement in Ireland every time they occur. That is why it is so important that we have effective efforts against terrorism alongside all the political initiatives of my right hon. Friend the Member for City of London and Westminster, South (Mr. Brooke), which are now being carried forward by my right hon. and learned Friend the present Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

Mr. Sheerman: The Home Secretary has something of a reputation as a political bruiser, but I know him to be a thoughtful man. Will he therefore answer just two questions—or at least take them away with him? First, why cannot the House and Parliament have some scrutiny of the secret services, and why cannot he see his way to initiating such a process? That does not have to be announced today, but it should come soon. Most other modern countries, such as the United States, have such scrutiny, and it works well. Secondly, why has the right hon. and learned Gentleman shut the door on a national police intelligence unit with an operational arm? Either the present Government or the next Labour Government will have to establish such a unit very soon.

Mr. Clarke: I will have talks on both matters because my instincts—like the instincts of the Government—are for openness and accountability in these matters as in other activities of government. I trust, however, that we all agree on the principle that there is no point in having accountability and openness in respect of operations if it is of a kind that will damage the effectiveness of the service.

I look forward to the talks that I have just offered at the Dispatch Box. I trust that the hon. Gentleman will accept that today's decision does not affect this matter in any way. I hope that, when he sees the next report of the commissioner on the Security Service Act, he will accept also that we have made great strides towards accountability for the security services.

Foreign Affairs

Question again proposed.

Mr. Peter Bottomley (Eltham): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Column 1 of yesterday's *Official Report* contains an answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Chelmsford (Mr. Burns) about the building society legislation. I refer to the matter only briefly, because we shall have the opportunity to debate a resolution on Thursday and later to consider the matter in connection with the Finance Bill, but I want to ask your advice.

This will be the fourth time that the matter has come before the House and, on three occasions, retroactive legislation has been involved. The Government should be very careful about interfering with matters of judicial review. Given that the issues at stake have not changed since October, it ought to be possible for the matter to be heard properly. May I ask you to remind Ministers who want to give information about such matters to try to do it rather more openly rather than sneaking it on the first Thursday of a new Parliament?

Madam Speaker: That is barely a matter for the Chair. I have referred to the answer that was given, which says quite clearly that the matter will be subject to a Ways and Means resolution which will be among those appearing on the Order Paper on 8 May, although I think that the point will have been taken.

11.35 am

Mr. David Howell: I am grateful for the opportunity to add a brief peroration to my earlier remarks, which were truncated by the arrival of the Executive in the House.

My theme was that, despite the end of the cold war, we are living in an extremely perilous era; that centrifugal and splintering forces threaten the stability and security of Europe; and that this ancient nation and democracy are not immune to those forces. It is important, therefore, that we have the principles of our foreign policy—nowadays merged with our domestic policy—absolutely clear and, in particular, that we use the opportunity of the Prime Minister's triumph at the time of the Maastricht treaty accords, and of the House being invited to approve a Bill related to the Maastricht treaty, which lies directly ahead, to establish clearly where we want Europe to go. We want it to take a strong lead from London, which we are now in a particularly good position to give, to meet new threats and to adjust to the 21st century. We do not want to recreate some gigantic, over-centralised, overblown structure more appropriate to the 19th century.

The vision that must guide my right hon. Friends is both an old one and a new one: it is the nation, and the nationhood of today, as a unifying force equipped for a 21st century role—as a focus for pride and patriotism and as a bulwark against the disintegrating and centrifugal forces that are everywhere in a dangerously fragmented world. That is what should guide us as we look at the Maastricht treaty.

Mr. Spearing: I am grateful to the Chairman of the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs in the previous Parliament and endorse what he said about the advisability of the completion of the report on which that Committee was engaged. Would it not be helpful for the report to be completed before we complete our consideration of the relevant Bill?

On that matter, the right hon. Gentleman mentioned subsidiarity and the repatriation of powers. Is it not a fact that the principle of subsidiarity, whatever it be, applies only, as is stated in article 3b of the draft treaty, in areas that do not fall within the executive competence of the Community? Does the right hon. Gentleman not agree that, particularly in respect of the single market, that exclusive competence is very wide?

Mr. Howell: The hon. Gentleman is very experienced in these matters and will know that that gives rise to the question of what that competence should be in the future and how these matters should be better defined in a firmer constitutional way than they have in the past, when the arrangements have led to a sensation of the creeping accumulation of powers by the Commission and the Community. Such matters require a great deal of work, and the Maastricht treaty provides not a staging post on the way to European unification and integration but a starting point for all that work, which will establish the kind of flexible and loosely confederal Europe that we need for the 21st century. That will be a force in the world for open and freer trade, as well as an opportunity for the new states of EFTA and the countries of eastern Europe to become part of it.

The statesmen of the new era are those who will really understand and convey to others the weave of the tapestry of the new kind of nationhood—not the old nationalist drum-beating but the concept of the nation as the effective organisational building block in the Europe of the future and in the new world order about which President Bush so frequently speaks.

Conservative Members must never forget our free market principles, our dedication to the individual and our welcome for the collapse of the collectivist and socialist commitment throughout the world as the answer to society's problems. That era has been and gone. But we must also never forget that these principles of ours must be applied in a world which, while seeking freedom everywhere—in Russia and all the former communist countries and in many former totalitarian areas—is also coming close to chaos. We shall require a new commitment to unity on this island. This nation has a golden opportunity to take a most vigorous lead, and we should do so.

11.38 am

Mr. Stuart Bell (Middlesbrough): I am grateful for the opportunity to speak so early in the debate, Madam Deputy Speaker, and I congratulate you on your new office. As I listened to the speech of the right hon. Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell), my mind boggled at the idea that the Conservative party might one day forget its free market principles. The day that that happens, we may as well all pack up and go home for ever.

I shall devote my remarks to the European presidency, on which the Foreign Secretary briefly touched and to which the Prime Minister referred on Wednesday. The right hon. Gentleman listed what he described as four "objectives":

"completion of the single market, continued reform of the common agricultural policy, negotiation of the Community's future finances and the first steps towards the Community's enlargement."—[*Official Report*, 6 May 1992; Vol. 207, c. 72.]

The Prime Minister is in a unique position. He will be the last President of the Community before the single market comes into force on 1 January and the last President of the

[Mr. Stuart Bell]

Community before the Maastricht treaty proposals come into effect. The right hon. Member for Guildford made some interesting remarks about the Maastricht treaty and referred to the variety of debate and discussions throughout the Community about the proposals. Because we have had debates on the issue prior to the Maastricht summit, that does not mean that it is not in order for our Community partners to have their debates afterwards. As the Foreign Secretary said, the debates on Maastricht that occurred in this place last November and December will continue, as it is a continual debate on a continually moving situation. We should welcome the fact that our Community partners will debate the issue at length. We all hope that they will reach the same conclusion that the House reached—that the Maastricht treaty proposals should be brought into force in the new year.

The Prime Minister's predecessor signed the Single European Act in 1986 after a guillotine motion. However, she eventually became hostile to it and became difficult within the Community. It has been left to the Prime Minister to pick up the tab and bring the single market into its final focus before the end of the year.

Reference has been made to a free market, but there must be a clear definition of the single market. The single market involves employment, rights—especially women's rights—and the environment. Under the Prime Minister's presidency, we should like to see a clearer definition of the market. As I have said before, it is not sufficient to have a single market. Such a market must be linked to what the Opposition would describe as social cohesion and that involves the social charter and the social chapter.

There is no point in trying to develop a single market without that social dimension. However we may view the events in Los Angeles, urban deprivation in a country based on the principles of the free market, it is clear what can happen. Our Community partners are aware of that and they understand the significance of a social dimension that goes hand-in-hand with the single market. We will not give up on that argument or walk away from the social chapter or the social charter. We will continue to press the Government on the issue and try to hold them accountable and to persuade them. In the years to come, I believe that the Government will come into line with the social chapter and the social charter like our Community partners.

We must also consider unemployment within the Community. It is clear that the exchange rate mechanism contributes to controlling inflation. However, one of its consequences is high unemployment. There is high unemployment throughout the Community. It is evident in Ireland, Germany and France and we have it here. One of the great challenges of the Government's presidency is to tackle the effects of unemployment in relation to the exchange rate mechanism.

We welcome the reforms that the Prime Minister, as President, will seek to bring about in the common agricultural policy. The right hon. Member for Guildford referred to the budget proposals of the next five years. In that respect, the CAP will still account for 54 per cent. of Community spending. We do not object to reform of the CAP in the interests of consumers, taxpayers, farmers and the countryside. However, the financial benefits of the reform should be devoted to a stronger regional policy and to more structural funds within the Community. We do not believe that the Government have had over the years a coherent and satisfactory strategy on regional investment and regional policy. We do not want a Community with the industrial strength of France and Germany at its hub. We, like people in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland, who are on the geographical periphery, should have the benefit of a strong regional policy and strategy.

The Prime Minister said that the membership of the Community would be widened. We welcomed that before the general election and my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) has also welcomed it. However, we believe that the vista on human rights should also be widened. There should be more human rights initiatives. We want a little vision as well as pragmatism from the Prime Minister when he assumes the presidency. President Bush did not believe in vision and we have seen some of the consequences of that in Los Angeles.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones): I intervene now only because I will clearly have difficulty in answering all the points when I reply and the hon. Gentleman has raised an important matter. I am sure that he will agree that, with regard to human rights, we should try to avoid duplication as we consider the role of the various institutions in the face of the new world order. The Council of Europe has a distinguished role in human rights and one might almost argue that it covers the human rights dimension of the European endeavour. We must be very careful not to have two worthy institutions to which we belong competing for competence.

Mr. Bell: I agree that they should be compatible and that they should not compete. If Labour had been in office, we would have been anxious to establish a European environmental initiative to go hand-in-hand with our vision on human rights and widening of membership.

The Prime Minister was correct to point out on Wednesday that he is the first head of Government in the Group of Seven to undertake to attend the Rio summit on the environment. He was also right to say that he would back our commitment to the target of returning carbon dioxide emissions to 1990 levels by the year 2000 provided that others do the same. He was also right to say that he hopes to sign global conventions on biological diversity and climatic change. However, the iaunching of a European environmental initiative under the Prime Minister's presidency would boost the Community's fifth action programme for the environment. As 1992 happens to be the European year of health and safety, he should use the European environmental initiative to pay special attention to health and safety and environmental issues in the workplace.

I do not want to prolong the debate, as at least two hon. Members wish to make maiden speeches. However, as the Prime Minister approaches the time to assume the presidency, he should be aware that his record and that of the Government hardly inspire confidence as we move towards 1 January. The Government have presided over record levels of unemployment and business failures. They have presided over record levels of homelessness, interest rates, home repossessions, crime levels and trade deficits.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Gorton said earlier that when he listened to the debate on the Queen's Speech on Wednesday he thought of lost opportunities.

When I listened to the Prime Minister on Wednesday I thought of Alexandre Ledreu Rollin, who was a lawyer and politician. He was one of the chief instigators of the February revolution of 1848—one of those socialist springtimes that we seldom see these days. As he forced his way through the mob, he cried to the crowd, "Let me pass. I have to follow them. I am their leader."

Faced with the fact that the British Government are already threatening to veto any proposal to reduce our budget rebate, faced with the fact that we have opted out of the social charter of the Maastricht treaty, faced with the fact that we are not in the narrow bands of the exchange rate mechanism, faced with the fact that we have little prospect of having the European central bank in London, faced with the fact that we have opted out of European monetary union, faced with the fact that the new Secretary of State for Employment has already been seen in the corridors of Brussels resisting a 48-hour week directive, on 1 July the Prime Minister will find himself seeking to scramble through groups of Community leaders, saying, "I am the Prime Minister, I am the President of the Community, let me pass, I am your leader." That may not be an epitaph for a president who is yet to begin his term, but, regrettably, it is the likeliest outcome.

11.50 am

Sir Rhodes Boyson (Brent, North): I wish to comment on the speech of the hon. Member for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell). In the council elections yesterday, there was little sign of the so-called enthusiastic return to the Labour party and the social charter, so perhaps the hon. Gentleman should not appear in the streets trying to enthuse people either as their leader or as their supporter.

There were three points in the Foreign Secretary's speech on which I should like to comment. First, my constituency has a large Greek-Cypriot population, so there is considerable concern regarding the Cypriot situation and I therefore listened carefully to what was said about that this morning. The second point concerns Kashmir and the third concerns Hong Kong. My memories of Kashmir and Hong Kong go far back, as I served in the services in India at the time of independence and also during the reoccupation of Hong Kong, so we can have a bit of history not just of the 19th century but of this century.

On Kashmir, unless we return to the agreement that was signed at one stage, that problem will go. Pressure must be brought to bear on that point. On Hong Kong, one hopes that as many liberties as possible will be transferred to the people before the country is linked once again with China.

I commend the Gracious Speech as one following a remarkable election victory, largely due to the popularity of the Prime Minister and the unpopularity of the Labour party. I do not want to rub that in, but I really must, as I made a note of it.

We have been elected on approval. I underline "on approval", rather like stamps, to get the economy right, to maintain the constitution and also to put right our relations with Europe. Those are the three issues on which the next two or three years of successful Conservative government will be decided.

I welcome the 0·5 per cent. reduction in interest rates this week, but our real rate of interest is still about two and a half times that of the United States of America or Japan. I do not believe that there will be a real economic revival until we get the real interest rate much lower than it is at present.

I agree also that one of the reasons why we won the general election was taxation. The public at large did not agree with the policy of the Labour party. Although we have lost the empire to which I referred, we have kept a language. The very fact that English and not Esperanto is the language of the world means that we have to compete with the rest of the world in respect of wages and taxes or we shall lose our scientists, engineers and business men. It is very important that we keep taxes down. I welcome the 20 per cent. level, and I trust that it will apply for all people on the standard rate within the next five years of this Government. However, I should also like the top rate to be reduced to 30 per cent., again to encourage business men and entrepreneurs to come to this country.

We can have low taxes only if we keep Government expenditure under control. In this century, the more Parliament meets and the more Ministers there are, the more Bills costing money in the long run are passed. I was delighted that the Gracious Speech said that the Government

"will reduce the share of national income taken by the public sector."

Up to 1987 we achieved that—we brought it below 40 per cent.—but in the past four years it has crept up again, as it always does, to about 43 per cent. We must get it back to below 40 per cent., as in Switzerland and Japan. The 40 per cent. level is very important. The various taxes that are taken from people in this country currently represent £10,000 per person at work. Nobody can say that we are a low tax country. The more that people make decisions about their own money, the better society is—rather than such decisions being made by Government committees, however elevated.

There is growing concern about European restrictions on free trade and manufacture. I say that not as a Euro-cynic but as a Euro-sceptic. I voted to remain in Europe, but I have always been far more dubious than the hon. Member for Middlesbrough, as he knows. If there are restrictions, Europe will be much less competitive with the rest of the world and the growing economies of the far east will surpass our ability to produce at a certain price.

It is apposite that I follow the hon. Member for Middlesbrough. I have great respect for the way in which he successfully fought a certain issue years ago. However, I disagree with him entirely on this matter. I am not happy about the Government's attitude to the 48-hour European directive. I want no restrictions on hours worked. Such decisions should be made entirely in this country. It is no use getting the social charter right in general and then losing every individual case that comes up. I see a degree of wobble in this matter. I do not like wobbling, and there was wobble on this last weekend. I trust that we can get a bit more spine before the decisions are made.

It is vital that we get an agreement on GATT. Financial services are something that this country does well, but we shall not be able to sell them to the world if we are handicapped by the European agricultural policy and subsidies for inefficient French and German farmers.

I welcome you to the Chair, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I looked around and saw a man of great distinction sitting in a Chair in which I have never seen him sitting before,

[Sir Rhodes Boyson]

and I am sure that the whole House will approve that elevation; I did not even see him walk in—he just arrived there to the great amazement of us all.

The election was clearly won by the Prime Minister's firm stand on constitutional issues. In the last resort, constitution issues matter even more than economical issues. Those constitutional issues are proportional representation, devolution or the break-up of the United Kingdom, and federal Europe.

Proportional representation is always backed by parties when they cannot win elections. When the Liberal party formed the Government of the country, it did nothing about it. Since the second world war the Labour party has twice had large majorities, but did nothing about proportional representation. I am reminded of the analogy of the boy who takes his bat away when somebody hits his wickets, as if to say, "If I can't bat, no one is going to play." Proportional representation would make the outcome of every election a hung Parliament. Italy, with its 50 Governments since the war and its 18 parties, Poland with its 29 parties—*[Interruption.]* The evidence is there, even though the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston) may not like it. The hon. Gentleman can always write to me with his evidence, and I will study it and reply. I always respect his views and do not always disagree with him. Last November Belgium took 100 days to form a Government. It also has a debt of 130 per cent. of its gross national product. Otto Von Habsburg, a Member of the European Parliament, has said that if Germany had had the first-past-the-post system after 1918 there would have been no Hitler. Recently in Baden-Wurttemberg, extremists achieved 11 per cent. of the vote and 15 seats. In Schleswig-Holstein, with a 6·5 per cent. vote they gained five seats.

We should remember that at a general election we vote to elect a Government. We do not vote for a set of pressure groups battling to control the country and changing from time to time. We want a firm Government. I believe that that is what the public want. It would be suicidal to move to any form of proportional representation.

The second point is the unity of the United Kingdom. I do not want six separate English assemblies. I had enough with the Greater London council. I do not want separate assemblies for Wales and Scotland. Once we start setting up such assemblies the people serving on them will inevitably have a vested interest in breaking up the United Kingdom.

The number of Members of Parliament who represent the various parts of the United Kingdom should be checked. The increase in the number of Members proportionally representing Wales and Scotland led to the destruction of the grammar schools in England beginning in 1964. At that time the Labour party was elected to government because of its extra seats in Scotland and Wales. The English electorate wanted the grammar schools to remain. People still want some form of selection. I leave that gently to be thought about by hon. Members on both sides of the House.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister's firm stand on the constitution won us two more seats in Scotland, and also did us quite nicely in Scotland yesterday. I am sorry to rub it in—it just seems to come out from time to time like a cork out of a bottle, and I feel ashamed every time because there must be much sorrow on the other side today. I am not offering drinks to all, but I recognise that there must be much sorrow.

My last point is opposition to a federal Europe. I was delighted and the country and certainly my constituents were delighted—they came out into the streets—when the Prime Minister said in the last week of the election campaign:

"I do not support a united states of Europe . . . I am not a federalist."

I was happier when we had the European Economic Community than when it became the European Community and put its hands into all other spheres. I certainly do not want a common currency or a central bank. Nor do I want to be ruled by the code Napoleon, against which our ancestors fought in the Napoleonic wars. I do not want to be allowed to do only what the state allows. That is the opposite of the position in Britain today, where liberties exist unless the state takes them away.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): The right hon. Gentleman is going back to the Edwardian age.

Sir Rhodes Boyson: There was nothing wrong with the Edwardian age, but I must not get into a conversation about that. My apologies, Mr. Deputy Speaker—I was incited. I must not be interrupted, especially as I am near my conclusion. My right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell) was interrupted. I agreed with his speech. When we withdrew, we did it because we agreed with one another's speeches. My elder daughter lives in my right hon. Friend's constituency and voted for him, so I listen to what he says carefully and report back so that she can be sure he is on the lines that he ought to be.

Mr. David Howell: And my right hon. Friend's granddaughter.

Sir Rhodes Boyson: Indeed, I have two granddaughters living in my right hon. Friend's constituency.

To return to my theme—I am being diverted and I must resist this, Mr. Deputy Speaker—the last thing that I want is to become part of a bureaucratic, restrictive nightmare Europe, as against an economic one which, by division of powers, creates greater prosperity.

Finally, I have to say that I look forward to four more Queen's Speeches in this Parliament before the next election. I was glad to hear the speech of my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary. I served as his deputy for one year in the Northern Ireland Office and worked well with him there. His speech was a good resumé. The only matter that I am concerned about is that we should watch the development of our relationship with Europe so that it is of advantage and not disadvantage to Britain.

12.4 pm

Sir Russell Johnston (Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber): I echo the congratulations that you have already been given, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on your appointment. We are pleased that you are in the Chair.

I suppose that if I study the speech of the right hon. Member for Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson) in *Hansard* tomorrow, on the usual odds I will find something in it with which I agree. But at the moment of speaking I cannot think of anything. The speech of the right hon. Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell), which preceded that of the right hon. Member for Brent, North and was lauded

by him, was backward, negative, old-fashioned and narrowly conservative in a way that I found disappointing. It was much worse than usual.

I wish to speak on three matters and I shall be brief because I realise the pressures of time. The United Nations, to which the Foreign Secretary and other hon. Members referred, is the first matter. The position at the United Nations has changed since the end of the cold war in that the famous Soviet veto has been withdrawn. Fortunately, so far there is no sign, although one can never be sure, that the Chinese will follow where the Soviet Union previously blocked. The Chinese did not block during the progress of the Gulf war. They did not block the measures taken to protect the Kurds in northern Iraq. One must be hopeful. The United Nations now has the capacity to take action. Therefore, in future it should be much more interventionist in its role of maintaining and sustaining peace and spreading health, education, economic development and so on throughout the world.

I have said before in the House that the two basic propositions upon which international diplomacy has been based since the war are out of date. The first is that there should be no interference in the internal affairs of a sovereign state. That was firmly and clearly breached in the case of the protection of the Kurds in northern Iraq. I am sure that it will be breached more and more in the future. At a certain stage, the international community cannot allow certain things to happen. It will therefore act if it is in a position to do so.

The second proposition is that each state has territorial integrity and that no boundaries should ever be changed. I have always thought that that was rather a ridiculous proposition. Sensibly, many boundaries should be changed. It is perfectly true that if equivalent human rights are provided, it perhaps does not matter too much what the country in which one lives is called. Nevertheless, there are plenty of examples of people wanting to live in one country rather than another. What people want is of some importance.

The right hon. Member for Brent, North may say that he does not want the Scots, the Welsh or anyone to have any sort of representative assembly. But I remind him that, despite the marginal increase in support in Scotland for the Tories, the great majority of people want some sort of representative assembly. The majority do not want independence, do not want to split up the United Kingdom and do not believe that the establishment of an assembly would be the first step on some slippery slope. In democracy there ought to be some opportunity to create such assemblies.

I wish to make one more point on the Kurds. I noticed the Minister react slightly on that point. The Minister will know that an internal election is being held by the Kurds in northern Iraq. It has been able to take place only because the German Landt of North Rhine-Westphalia has sent the Kurds the necessary ballot papers, which they did not have, and indelible ink, which is necessary because the Kurds have no registers whatever. What have we done? Not very much, I am afraid. We have been asked to send observers, even unofficially, yet we have refused to do so.

Saddam Hussein is still harrying the Kurds by both long-range shelling and occasional incursions of aircraft. They are still subject to considerable pressures. There is interference in human rights. Considering the amount of money we spent and the lives that were lost—not many, but each life in itself is valuable—I am not impressed with human rights in Kuwait. I am certainly not impressed with the way that administratively it has treated its internal Palestinian population. I am not impressed by the way that some of the domestics who seek work there have been treated. It is something that the Kuwaitis should put right, and the international community should tell them to do so.

In an intervention, the Minister referred to the Council of Europe and said that we do not want competition for competence. That is right. Although the Council of Europe dabbles in many matters, basically it is concerned with culture, education and human rights. It is the European Community which competes with the Council of Europe, not the other way around. The European Community has enough to do without dabbling in culture and education. Of course, an overlap on human rights is inevitable. Both are interested in that matter, and there is no way around that. The Minister is nodding sagely. Perhaps he would consider giving a little more money to the Council of Europe. He looks horrified by the possibility.

Mr. Garel-Jones: I am not looking horrified. However, as the hon. Gentleman knows Britain is one of the "grands payeurs" in the Council of Europe. Our contribution each year is decided on a vote among its members, and the hon. Gentleman knows that we always meet whatever contribution is set. Britain is one of the four largest contributors.

Sir Russell Johnston: I am not talking just about Britain. It is important to consider the overall level of contribution that member states make to the sort of work that they expect the Council of Europe to do. That contribution is less than it should be.

I want to say a word about UNESCO, which has not been referred to by previous speakers. I have a rather bitter recollection of the Government's announcement about UNESCO on 22 November 1984, which also happened to be the day that the Liberal party had its first full Supply day in the House since the war. At that time there was famine in Ethiopia and we chose overseas aid as the subject. I had the honour of opening that debate. It was the first time that a Liberal had spoken for half an hour in introducing a debate. In the middle of the debate, the then Foreign Secretary, Sir Geoffrey Howe, decided to announce the United Kingdom's withdrawal from UNESCO. That meant that all the coverage in the newspapers the next day was about UNESCO, with not a word about the Ethiopian problem.

We should rejoin UNESCO as quickly as possible; there is no justification for staying outside it. The argument that somehow our coming out of it led to a reform of the organisation is spurious. I agree that there were a number of problems, most of them to do with the previous director-general, who was a strange person in some respects. He was certainly very dictatorial. Those countries that remained in the organisation have been responsible for the changes.

Arms control has already been mentioned as a major United Nations preoccupation, so I do not need to repeat what has been said. I agree that we should work actively, through the United Nations, to control the sale of arms.

As I said, I reject the approach of the right hon. Members for Guildford and for Brent, North towards the European Community. Our approach has always been a federal one. Federalism does not mean centralisation; it

[Sir Russell Johnston]

means decentralisation. Our approach is fundamentally different from the Government's approach which, as the Foreign Secretary said, has tended to be based on an intergovernmental model. We are arguing for a supranational model with structured devolution in a federation. Maastricht was a missed opportunity, and we contributed to the missing of it.

There should be a common foreign and security policy. I am puzzled by this rather opaque reference in the Queen's Speech:

"They will aim to develop the Western European Union as a means of strengthening the European pillar of the alliance and the defence component of the European Union."

I am all in favour of a defence component of the European union. There is great sense and merit in using the WEU as a bridge because members of the WEU are also members of the European Community—although not the other way around because of Ireland and because of countries such as Austria coming in. Neutrality is an out-of-date word because there are no sides to be neutral in between. I should like the WEU to act as a bridge, and if that is what the phrase in the Queen's Speech means, I am pleased.

I do not need to repeat what was said by the hon. Member for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell) about the social charter and the need to have a social component in the single market. I agree with what he said.

The right hon. Member for Guildford is an amiable gentleman, but sadly many amiable gentleman utter strange remarks. Among the many things in his speech with which I disagreed was his comment that the idea of a single currency was fatuous. Far from being fatuous, it is thought by many to be a necessary precondition to an actively operating single market. It would also be convenient both for business and the individual citizen.

I had expected some words on the European budget because that will be a problem for the European Community. For some time, we have needed a general review of the way that individual countries pay, perhaps related to gross national product. There will be a row about the special British provision. I hope that the Government will consult the House considerably in advance.

Another criticism of the right hon. Member for Guildford was that the European Community was unaccountable. Very often, the reason why we do not know about European measures in advance is that Ministers do not put them before the House and ask it to express its opinion until after the event. Therefore, it is our fault, not the fault of the structure of the European Community.

How big will the European Community be? Is there an optimum size or will it just go on growing, like Topsy? I think that a line should be drawn somewhere, but I am not sure where. Once we start going to places like the Aleutian islands, as the Minister said, it becomes a little out of hand and difficult.

Mr. Garel-Jones: I intervene in the hon. Gentleman's speech again lest I am unable to deal with all the points that he is making when I reply to the debate. I cannot let him get away with the assertion that the Government do not inform the House on those issues. I dare say that our mechanisms for informing the House about and discussing them with hon. Members European directives are susceptible to improvement. But, as the hon. Gentleman knows, every draft directive that issues from Brussels must be made available to the House within 24 hours, must be accompanied by an explanatory memorandum within 10 days and must then be examined by the Scrutiny Committee. That arrangement may be susceptible to improvement, but the hon. Gentleman is being a little hard in saying that the House is not kept informed on those matters.

Sir Russell Johnston: The Minister should count himself lucky that I am being only a little hard. My complaint is not that documents are not necessarily available. I am speaking of the means of open discussion, in advance of Ministers attending the Council. That situation is not satisfactory.

The Foreign Secretary spoke of what he called destructive nationalism appearing in the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia. What has been happening there has been horrifying and, in many cases, barbaric. I do not agree with the view on Yugoslavia expressed by the right hon. Member for Guildford, I heard him state on "The World at One" recently. He blames the Germans. It is not fair to blame them for what that right hon. Gentleman would call the over-rapid recognition of Slovenia and Croatia. That was inevitable.

I also believe that what is now happening in Bosnia and Hercegovina would have happened anyway. There was no way to stop it, apart from intervening militarily, and one can understand why no country was prepared to put troops in such a role. We might have considered some means of keeping the Yugoslav air force on the ground. We had the capacity to do that without creating much danger for ourselves. We did it in Iraq extremely effectively. For example, I would not be against telling the Serbians, "You will not use your aircraft casually to launch rockets and kill civilians here and there." I have already put that proposition to the Foreign Secretary.

The Foreign Secretary and the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) should remember, in terms of destructive nationalism, that Yugoslavia, and the Soviet Union on a vaster scale, imposed central imperial power on recognised national groups. We are seeing the revolt against that.

Time in this debate is precious and I cannot deal with many points that I would otherwise have raised. The know-how funds are doing well, although it is clear that we could spend far more, and more flexibility by the Treasury would be welcome. I appreciate the approach of the Government in using the money carefully. I also appreciate that it is not easy to have control over the money in large areas. To ensure that the money is used wisely is a good precaution, but we may need to make a bigger international effort, perhaps in the terms expressed by the right hon. Member for Gorton in relation to a Marshall plan approach. I hope that at the G7 discussions in Munich the British Government will take a positive approach to such a proposal, should one come forward.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): Does my hon. Friend agree that, in terms of the know-how funds, the Government should look carefully at the possibility of increasing assistance to eastern Europe and the countries of the former Soviet Union to provide help

in respect of civilian nuclear installations, which constitute a menace to them and to us? There is scope for Britain to offer technical help in dealing with such problems.

Sir Russell Johnston: I am not competent to say whether that could appropriately come under the know-how funds. Perhaps it comes under the arrangements which already exist within the Atomic Energy Authority, which already has 50 or 60 people in the Soviet Union. I agree with my hon. Friend that we must try to give help.

My central criticism of the Government's approach is that they are too laid back. I fear that there are still too many on the Government Benches who believe that, somehow, everything the British do is better than what can be done by everyone else. I do not take that view. We should talk more positively about co-operation, not only in the immediate area of the European Community but in terms of contributing more on the international scene through the United Nations.

12.26 pm

Mr. Cyril D. Townsend (Bexleyheath): I welcome you to the Chair, Mr. Deputy Speaker. To see, as the new Chairman of Ways and Means, someone from one's own intake abandoning the boisterousness of the Back Benches and becoming a pillar of the parliamentary establishment brings joy to those you have left in the swamps behind you.

I also pay tribute to the Foreign Secretary. We in this country are lucky to have Rolls-Royce diplomacy, and I cannot think of a better driver for that Rolls-Royce. To change the metaphor, Britain has the ability to box above its weight in international affairs, and I suspect that that was an important factor in the recent general election.

The hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston)—I have spoken following him in many debates—survived the election with only 26 per cent. of the vote in his constituency. We are used to being lectured by those on the Bench which he occupies on the danger of running the nation with what they describe as a small percentage of the total vote. I shall search his speech in *Hansard* carefully tomorrow to see if a note of humility entered his contribution, bearing in mind his share of the vote.

I wish at the outset to discuss defence. Deciding which subjects to choose, bearing in mind the time available for the debate, is like being offered a box of chocolates. One picks one or two, but not long afterwards realises that it was a shame not to have chosen some of the others.

I was among those who were persuaded to support the "Options for Change" proposals. I did so with some reluctance, having a military background. It seemed right that Britain should be responding to the changing scene in eastern Europe, with east Germany now part of NATO and with Russia applying to be a member of NATO as well. I see one of my Whips with his pencil poised. I enter a note of caution; the rest of my remarks today will be rather bland.

We have cut defence expenditure by 6 per cent. In the election campaign, our opponents were suggesting cuts of 27 and even 50 per cent. Having cut defence by 6 per cent., I would find it hard to support in this Parliament any further cuts, still less be persuaded or be asked to persuade any of my hon. Friends, that such a further cut was practical in today's terms.

Changing from a continental to a maritime strategy, as we are doing, is expensive, occasioning greater mobility involving more helicopters, better communications and so on. We cannot have defence on the cheap and it has never been our policy to attempt to do that.

In considering the situation in Europe, one is looking at a vast scene. I note that, in a parliamentary handbook, I am described as a Euro-idealist, whatever that may mean. It was curious in the last election to find myself outflanked by the Liberal Democrats and my Labour opponent, whose approach was so remote from public opinion that they did themselves great harm. Even so, there is an element of idealism in what we are attempting to do in Europe.

As I have told the House before, my grandfather, who was in the Navy, was a beachmaster at Gallipoli and my father was shot in the face at Dunkirk. Both wars came about because Europe was divided, and I take great delight in the fact that my generation is in the process of building up a Europe that will be strong enough to resist such pressures and, I hope, to extend peace to other parts of the world.

Some people are engaged in an argument about a wider and deeper Europe, and I heard what my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary had to say. My personal preference is for greater attention to depth. I have spoken to politicians and diplomats in eastern European countries. They have a thirst for membership of the European Community. They are in danger of seeing it as the answer to all their economic and political problems, which is nonsense. Many of those countries are not ready for the European Community and will not be for a long time to come, but I understand their support for the European Community—it is only natural.

We should not be ashamed of what we are trying to do. Twelve ancient, proud countries are trying to come together to achieve greater coherence to our foreign policy. That is jolly hard to achieve. We are trying to have a genuine common market and to do something about subsidies and the crazy common agricultural policy. We should not be ashamed of taking time to sort out our own problems before we widen the European Community, although I agree that we cannot wait until everything is perfect before we attempt to do so.

I agree with much of what the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber said about our approach to the middle east. I believe that Britain has a greater responsibility for the Palestinian issue than any other country in the world. Our predecessors made a ghastly blunder. They promised a small strip of land to two different peoples: the Arabs, who had helped Britain get rid of the Turks from Jerusalem and to destroy the Ottoman empire; and the Jews, who were at that time seeking a homeland, as they were dispersed throughout Europe. I am unhappy that we have only observer status at the current rounds of talks. Although I welcome those talks, they are going down an odd track.

A few months ago, I was invited to sign a petition by a prominent composer in Iceland. Part of it said:

"It is the policy of the United States that the Conference"

—referring to Madrid—

"will not be based on international law or on UN resolutions but on the current balance of power between participants. The Palestinian people is now pressured to relinquish its inalienable and universally recognised rights, as fixed in the UN Charter and repeatedly endorsed by the General Assembly of the UN".

[Mr. Cyril D. Townsend]

I decided not to sign his petition, but he had a point when he suggested self-determination. Although it is not a theoretical concept for this country—God knows, we fought a war 8,000 miles away in the south Atlantic so that 1,800 people could exercise their rights of self-determination and in recent months we felt that the Kuwaitis were justified in resisting Iraqi aggression—what about self-determination for the Palestinian people?

I hope that the Foreign Office does not feel that we can simply leave it to the United States. I welcome the achievements of Bush and Baker, but 33 per cent. of Israeli goods flow into Europe and we are entitled to tell the Israelis that, if they want special treatment within the European Community, they should behave according to the Geneva convention in terms of a country occupying territory.

Unbelievably Yitzhak Shamir said in Madrid that the problem was not about territory. What would we have said if Galtieri, at the time of the Falklands conflict when the Argentine troops were in Stanley, had said that he was prepared to have a conference and discuss the long-term political future of the south Atlantic but that, naturally, territory did not form part of the dispute? I say bluntly that, in the middle east, we are talking about the military occupation of land. In my father's generation, in 1939 in Europe, the military occupation of land was unacceptable. It is equally unacceptable in the 1990s, and must be brought to an end.

In the past 18 years, I have taken up much of the time of the House speaking about Cyprus. I started my adult life being shot at by EOKA. I was lucky enough to guard Sir Hugh Foot, the last colonial governor of Cyprus, and I have been fascinated by that beautiful but tragic island ever since.

Once again, the world looks to the United Kingdom to give a lead. Even the United States says to us, "You know the place; you were the colonial power and you have sovereign bases, so you give us the lead." We are right to support the Secretary-General, but I hope—the Foreign Secretary gave us some encouragement—that we shall play a major role in obtaining a successful conclusion to the talks.

At a time when barriers are coming down across Europe—I was in Berlin when the wall went up, and I was delighted to see it come down—it is disgraceful that, in Cyprus, there is still a green line—in fact, it is rusty red—running across that beautiful country. It divides one group of people from another and it requires a United Nations force, including British troops, to keep the two sides apart. Cyprus is a member of the Commonwealth and wants to be part of the European Community. We have clear obligations that I want to see carried through to the limit.

I find myself in optimistic mood. My hon. Friends will know that I did not always agree with what the Government tried to do in the 1980s. I thought that there were occasions when we were arrogant and did not listen to the people of this country. I am happy with the way that we have resolved various problems, and I am more than delighted that the British public have supported us in what we have done.

I look forward to five years of widening prosperity. I like the image, once used by Churchill, of the rearguard being brought in. We know from our constituencies that we have rearguards that need to be brought in. In our inner cities, among some of the poorest people of the country, there is a sense of isolation. The Conservative message is not merely to promote competition; it contains an important element of compassion.

The other day I came across a Gaelic blessing, "May the road rise to meet you, may the wind be always at your back, may the sun shine on your face." Following what, for me, came as an unexpected election victory, the road is rising to meet the Government of the day. The local elections suggest that the wind of public opinion is still at our back. We have suffered a cruel recession; there is a high level of unemployment in my London borough. But I believe that we are lifting out of that recession. I also believe that a bit of sunshine on their faces will be warmly welcomed by the people of this country.

12.37 pm

Mr. Mike Gapes (Ilford, South): I congratulate you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on your appointment. You are new to your post and I am new to the House. As a new Member, I was given advice by some of my colleagues. Some people said, "You should try to be non-controversial, but then you risk being boring." Other people said, "You should try to be controversial, but then you risk being interrupted." I hope that I shall strike a balance—perhaps I shall be both boring and interrupted.

I succeed a Member, Neil Thorne, who served the House for 13 years and had a reputation among his constituents of dealing diligently with their problems. He is bitterly disappointed at his defeat, and I arrive as someone who never expected to be elected in such circumstances. Throughout its history, the constituency of Ilford, South has normally followed the national trend. There have been only two occasions since 1945 when the constituency has had a Member of Parliament different from the Government. In 1950-51 and 1964-66, it had a Conservative Member of Parliament under a Labour Government.

I am the first Labour Member of Parliament for Ilford, South to serve under a Conservative Government. My constituency is an Essex constituency. I was born in Essex and I am a man of Essex. We are not all Thatcherites or Tories in Essex—there are many Labour Essex men and women. In my constituency there was a swing to the Labour party of 5·9 per cent., three times the national average and twice the London average. That happened because we fought on the policies that the Labour party fought on nationally—on transport, health and education, and unemployment. We fought consistently and firmly, and we won.

I therefore do not believe that some of the explanations for Labour's defeat are necessarily valid. Sweeping generalisations do not take account of different results in defferent constituencies.

I want to say a word about another predecessor of mine. In 1974, when I was still a student, I worked through the summer trying to get postal votes on the Becontree estate in Goodmayes, one of the wards in my constituency, on behalf of the Labour Member of Parliament, Arnold Shaw, who had been the Member from 1966 to 1970. He was re-elected in February 1974, and I helped him to get an increased majority in the October 1974 election.

Arnold Shaw worked hard on a number of issues. He was a firm opponent of racism and was firmly in favour of stopping all cruelty to animals. If I can follow in his footsteps, in those two areas I will be a worthy successor to him.

Mine is a London constituency in Essex. Ilford expanded 100 years ago because of the coming of the railways. Now 40 per cent. of its people commute into central London, travelling from Seven Kings and Ilford to Liverpool Street or on the Central line from Newbury Park and Gants Hill to the centre of London. Alternatively, they have to try to drive down the Romford Road or go along the appalling A13 through the chicane around Canning Town.

It is appallingly difficult for anyone living in east London to travel into central London to work. East London is the neglected part of this city. It is the area with the highest unemployment, and it has suffered from a lack of investment. It also suffers greatly from the fact that we have no strategic Greater London authority to provide planning and environmental measures to help our community. Ilford would greatly benefit from such a body.

We would also benefit from the end of the recession and the ending of unemployment which has resulted in one in nine of my constituents being out of work. We lost half our manufacturing industry in the late 1980s. A vivid example of that occurred last week, when the Plessey factory in Ilford started being knocked down. It has been disused and empty for some time—since even before the defence cuts under "Options for Change". Plessey was symbolic to Ilford, but the jobs disappeared a long time ago, and now the factory is just rubble. We need to ensure that the same fate does not overtake other defence industry workers and defence establishments, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) said earlier.

My constituency is a mixed one. East London and Ilford have often received immigrants and refugees from other parts of the world and we have Sikhs, Muslims, Hindus, Jews and many others from various parts of the world. We also have a large Irish Catholic community and people from the Caribbean and Africa. We all live in harmony.

Although there are difficult international questions—the one over Kashmir being a case in point, events in the middle east being another—there is harmony in our community. It is a bit ironic to note that if the grandparents of some people in Ilford tried to seek asylum in this country today, they would suffer fingerprinting, restrictions, fines on air carriers and, potentially, the inability to seek asylum if the Bill introduced before the election is reintroduced.

We need a sense of history and perspective. The ancestors of many hon. Members sought refuge in this country from oppression, exploitation and discrimination. However, the Government and the European Community by some of its proposals seek to erect barriers against people in other countries who are in danger and in fear. I do not accept that, and more should be said about it.

I mentioned the middle east. In that context, I disagree with the hon. Member for Bexleyheath (Mr. Townsend), because one can draw some hope from the talks process initiated by the United States. That process will be greatly assisted and accelerated if the Labour party wins the election in Israel in June and if there can be greater involvement by European Community countries, including Britain. It is a shame that there are not similar processes in other areas of the world, because Kashmir, for example, would benefit from dialogue and negotiations between the parties in that dispute.

I was struck by the Prime Minister's words on Wednesday. He said:

"Increasingly, countries that join the European Community will also join the Western European Union, as the European pillar of a common defence effort; but, if the need ever again arose, it would be through NATO that the members of the WEU would defend themselves. Any European country joining the WEU will still look to NATO —including the American presence in Europe—for its defence."—[*Official Report*, 6 May 1992; Vol. 207, c. 73.]

That is fine, but then I read the Maastricht treaty. Article J.4 states:

"The common foreign and security policy shall include all questions related to the security of the Union, including the eventual framing of a common defence policy, which might in time lead to a common defence."

That is a far stronger statement than the one by the Prime Minister, and it is not qualified.

The wording in the Queen's Speech is different again, and does not seem to accord with what the Prime Minister said or with the Maastricht treaty. It states that the Government

"will aim to develop the Western European Union as a means of strengthening the European pillar of the alliance and the defence component of the European Union."

That mentions a "defence component" and not common defence, which is a much stronger term than simply "component".

It is time for the Government to come clean. Do they favour a continuation of the Atlantic Alliance, or do they favour a Western European Union military alliance? They cannot have both, because as anyone who has had discussions with the French socialist Government or with people in other European countries knows, ultimately one must make a choice.

So far, the Government have refused clearly to spell out their aims. What will be their stand on integrated European forces? What view will they take on British and French nuclear weapons, and where will ultimate authority for them lie? Nowhere in the Queen's Speech or in the debate have we had an answer to those questions, and we deserve answers.

Although there is a reference in the Gracious Speech to the Government working

"for a comprehensive and verifiable ban on chemical weapons, to prevent the proliferation of biological weapons and other weapons of mass destruction",

it is regrettable that there is no reference to a comprehensive nuclear test ban treaty. How can the Government expect other countries to strengthen the non-proliferation treaty and to preserve it after 1995 if they are not prepared to act in good faith, in accordance with article 6, to secure further measures of nuclear disarmament?

There is a great window of opportunity. Both Russia and France, for different reasons, have placed a moratorium on nuclear testing. Why is Britain not joining them, and persuading China and the United States to follow suit? There would then be the possibility of a global ban on nuclear testing. There is a great opportunity; it will be tragic if it is lost and the French moratorium comes to an end.

I hope to make further contributions to debates in this place. I shall not confine myself to foreign affairs matters.

[Mr. Mike Gapes]

I understood that it would be appropriate to do so today, however, and I appreciate the opportunity that the House has given me.

12.51 pm

Mr. Jacques Arnold (Gravesham): It is an honour to be able to follow the maiden speech of the hon. Member for Ilford, South (Mr. Gapes), who confidently and competently exposed his considerable knowledge of international affairs. He and I both represent barometer seats. He told us that his goes back to 1945 and that until the general election his constituency was always represented by a supporter of whatever Government were in office. Gravesham's record goes back to 1922, and has bucked the trend on only two occasions. I wish the hon. Gentleman well over the next four or five years. Barometer seats are such that I shall be back in the House after the next general election and he will not.

It is a good morning for debating the Gracious Speech. We are secure in the knoweldge that we shall have a Conservative Government with a majority for at least the next five years. This morning we are safe in the knoweldge that throughout the country 1,000 Conservative councillors have been safely returned to serve their councils over the years ahead. However, there is no room for triumphalism on the Government Benches. The Conservative party won the general election because of the manifest unsuitability of the Labour party for government, but early canvasses and opinion polls made it clear that the electorate was dissatisfied with two years of recession and with the way the Government handled those matters, and took the view that responsibility for the recession rested in no small measure with us.

I fear that we turned the tourniquet too tightly when dealing with an inflationary surge. I well remember our departed right hon. Friend, Norman Tebbit, warning the then Chancellor of the Exchequer of the dangers of turning the tourniquet too tightly and creating a recession. His comments were extremely relevant, especially with hindsight.

The people knew, however, that there was no contest when it came to who had the economic competence and fitness to lead the country out of the recession. That is why we have a Conservative Government. The country also weighed up possible leadership in the international arena in the years ahead, the choice being between the right hon. Members for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock) and for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) and my right hon. Friends the Members for Huntingdon (Mr. Major) and for Witney (Mr. Hurd). What a choice that was, and there was no doubt what the result would be in a general election. The team that is to lead Britain in a changed world needs to be excellent, thorough and understanding.

We have a changed world indeed. The Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, for example, are gone and in their place is turmoil and Balkanisation. There is a warning for this country in the dangers of Balkanisation when we think of the integrity of the United Kingdom. The United States is troubled and wallowing in lack of direction. The symptoms of that were shown recently in Los Angeles.

Germany seems to have taken very much the wrong track by giving top priority to its territorial ambitions for unification. It has not faced up to the cost of unification, and the way in which it is going about unification is making the rest of Europe and the world pay for the costs of its territorial ambitions. Germany has created a distortion in the strength of the deutschmark which, combined with the relaxation and weakening of the work ethic in Germany, is creating a problem. The Germans must be careful, and they must watch out for the rise of mindless thugs. We are hearing a discordant baying from such people which is reminiscent of the 1930s. The onus is on our friends in the Christian Democratic Union and in the Christian Social Union to stand firm and courageous, and not to give way to the intolerant racist beast which has lain dormant for 40 years in the breast of the German nation.

Across the channel, France is yet another example of the failures of socialism. This should be a great opportunity for the moderate right in France. The way forward for the moderate right in France is not to make references to "smelly foreigners", but to remember the wise statement quoted by Sir Winston Churchill:

"United we stand—divided we fall."

It is incumbent on moderate conservative parties in France to get together and to win power in France—and to join us in creating a new Europe of co-operating nation states.

For far too long, France alone has given the leadership in the European Community. Our timidity in not joining the European Community in the first place—and, perhaps, in delaying taking part properly in the exchange rate mechanism—created a situation in which those organisations were moulded in accordance with French vested interests. We need to break that mould and create a new Europe which takes into account the requirements of our country and those of the other smaller nations within the European Community.

In this troubled world, we see Japan losing its self-confidence and going into recession. The work ethic there is also coming into some doubt. We contrast that with the United Kingdom which has a firm majority Government, an economy coming out of recession and a leadership who are the right team with the right policies. We have the right opportunities to bring things about.

The challenge of this Parliament is to get Europe right for the future. The Maastricht agreement, an achievement of the Prime Minister, was one of the great pointers for the public in the general election. The Maastricht agreement and the negotiations showed that we have in the Prime Minister a man of steel. That man of steel will preside over the future of our European Community for six months later this year.

We have a series of challenges in our European Community. We must tame the mushrooming expansion of the convergence funds and we must reform the common agricultural policy. We must carry out a revision of the exchange rate mechanism and we must set the Community on the road to becoming a Community of co-operating nation states and not on the road to becoming a centralised federal bureaucracy. I was delighted to see those objectives headlined and highlighted in the Gracious Speech.

Clearly, we are now on the road to recovery from the recession in this country. With that will come the reduction in the public spending deficit, but the prospects for a reduction could be ruined if we do not face up to the challenge of the convergence funds.

It is a matter of common agreement that the common agricultural policy involves a very large and, to a great

extent, wasted expenditure of resources. It was the CAP which created the very large deficit that Britain had to face. If the convergence funds continue on their current course, as proposed, it will make the net United Kingdom contribution to the European Community of £2·1 billion look very small indeed. We all know that the proposals being touted about by Jacques Delors are to increase the regional funds by an extra £7 billion, equivalent to a total of £20 billion by 1997. That vast amount will unstitch the financial solidity of the countries of Europe and put intolerable strains on our own budget.

The reform of the CAP is essential. The failure to reform the CAP is a major cause of the continuing failure of the Uruguay round of GATT. The continuing failure to achieve a successful conclusion to that round could retard or even destroy recovery from worldwide recession. The objectives are best summed up by Arthur Dunkel, who commented recently:

"By throwing away the weapons of protectionism—import controls, restrictive deals, laws against the free flow of goods and services—a new trade deal will cut European unemployment and help Eastern Europe revive. Above all, it will start to arrest the decline of the poverty-stricken countries of Africa and Latin America."

I should like to dwell on the subject of Latin America and Africa. Particularly in Latin America, we have witnessed a remarkable success with the return to democracy. With the one exception of the Cuban dictatorship, all of Latin America has returned to democracy.

Mr. Corbyn: What about Peru?

Mr. Arnold: The recent hiatus in Peru must be dealt with.

Mr. Corbyn: Come on—it was a military coup.

Mr. Arnold: What occurred in Peru represents a response to Marxist terrorism in the form of the Shining Path. Those pressures should be recognised but the consequences should not be acceptable. I am sure that my right hon. Friends have expressed Great Britain's feelings to President Fujimori about that blot on the return of democracy in Latin America—another being Cuba, whose regime the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) supports.

The return of multi-party democracy is not confined to Latin America. It is extending in Africa, as we saw with the handover of power following the elections in Zambia. Combined with the return of democracy to those countries is the introduction of liberal economies, privatisation and the opening up of markets. Like democracy in Peru, those are very fragile flowers and we must work against pressures such as those exerted by the continuing failure to reform GATT. All those improvements would be ruined if the developed world—the European Community, the United States, and Japan—lurched into renewed protectionism.

The other objective is the revision of the exchange rate mechanism. I believe that our membership of the ERM has had a major influence on the recession in the United Kingdom. Although it has had the benevolent effect of creating stable exchange rates of benefit to international trade for Britain and in assisting central banks to control international fund movements by international corporate treasurers and currency speculators, I do not believe that the fixed exchange rate should be an overriding economic objective to the detriment of other economic objectives such as growth and employment. That matter will have to be examined in the months ahead—in particular, we should consider whether there is good sense in tying the ERM currencies to the anchor of the deutschmark. It may well be that, because of events in Germany, that link is already out of date.

Germany made clear policy decisions about the priority of the reunification of Germany and in the process has destroyed the strength and stability of the deutschmark. To retain that strength and stability, Germany has introduced interest rates that are too high in order to maintain the over-valuation of the deutschmark. That is forcing others to alter currency values through excessive interest rates to the detriment of our economies and employment. The redefinition of currency relationships must be a primary objective of the United Kingdom presidency of the Community.

My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary pleaded that we Europeans should not be for ever tearing up the institutions of Europe to look at the roots. He said that we should leave European Community institutions alone. In particular, we should bear in mind the centralised Community role in foreign affairs. The more we head down the path to a single European voice in the world community, the more likely it is that the Community, as an institution, will take the permanent seat in the United Nations Security Council that we have rightly enjoyed, as have the French, since the United Nations was established. That is a particular aspect of our voice in the world that we must not overlook.

Almost alone among the leading countries in the west, we have a stable Government with a perspective of years. We have an outstanding Foreign Secretary and we have a Prime Minister who has shown his mettle. We must now exercise our leading role in the European Community and in the Security Council to find a new, stable way in a greatly changed world.

1.6 pm

Mr. Tom Cox (Tooting): I join other hon. Members who have today extended their warm congratulations to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on your appointment. Many hon. Members, irrespective of which party they represent, have worked closely with you and the many organisations in this place, and we know how helpful and courteous you have always been. It is a great pleasure to see you join the distinguished new appointments of Madam Speaker and the other Deputy Speakers. I am honoured to make this speech while you are in the Chair.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Ilford, South (Mr. Gapes) on his maiden speech. We have known each other for a long time and we are close friends. In his short speech, he covered many of the issues that are of great concern to London Members, irrespective of the parties that they represent. He also brings to the House a wide knowledge of international affairs. Although he said that that would not be the sole subject on which he will concentrate, I am sure that he will always be listened to with great interest when he speaks on international affairs. It will be only a short time before my hon. Friend the Member for Ilford, South is held in great respect in the House for his knowledge and for the courtesy that he will

[Mr. Tom Cox]

show to colleagues in debates and in his general membership of the House. It is a great pleasure to welcome him here.

I want to concentrate solely on Cyprus, for several reasons. Sadly, Cyprus will shortly have been divided for 18 years following the invasion be Turkey in 1974. As other hon. Members have said today, we are one of the guarantor powers for the island of Cyprus. Cyprus is a member of the British Commonwealth.

I welcomed the comments made by the Foreign Secretary and by my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman). Many hon. Members in this place have had a long interest in Cyprus. Like myself, they have always argued for one overriding commitment and principle—a united Cyprus where the rights of the communities on the island, be they Greek or Turkish, are respected and protected. No one has had greater involvement in that criterion for Cyprus than the hon. Member for Bexleyheath (Mr. Townsend).

Over those long 18 years, many of us have followed the involvement of the United Nations, the Inter-Parliamentary Union, the Council of Europe and the European Parliament. We have had great hopes that there would be an honourable settlement, but, no matter how high our hopes have been, there has been no progress to an honourable settlement.

Sadly, many of the things that we have opposed for many years still exist. The island is divided. Thousands of Turkish troops are still on the island. Stolen property and land are still in the hands of the people who took it, even though they have no lawful right to it. Attempts to attain the free movement of people throughout the island have met with no progress. There have been attempts to open Famagusta as a city. Sadly, again we have got nowhere. Despite our efforts, there has been virtually no meaningful progress.

Although both communities have obviously suffered, the Turkish Cypriots have suffered far more than the Greek Cypriots. There has been very little development in northern Cyprus. Without doubt, the rights of Turkish Cypriots have been eroded. They are given few opportunities to travel. One has seen the lowering of their standard of living. That is one of the things that I deeply regret.

Despite the fact that Mr. Denktash describes himself as the President of northern Cyprus, there is widespread opposition to him within the Turkish Cypriot community. He most certainly does not speak with the full authority of Turkish Cypriots. In October, an article in the Turkish Cypriot newspaper, *Ortam*—it is still fairly recent—states:

> "Mr. Denktash, who for 30 years has accused his opponents of treason and gagged them through bullying and with political terror, should realise that he has reached the end of the road. Denktash, who is a custom-made person for the cold war period, is unable to keep in step with the new understanding prevailing in the world now."

Sadly, that sums up Mr. Denktash. Whereas, to their credit, many Turkish Cypriots wish to see a settlement, we cannot say the same about Mr. Denktash.

What is of specific concern to us and, I hope, to the Government is that there is a debate on Cyprus at the Council of Europe in Strasbourg today. The Minister should note that the number of the relevant document is 6589. It is being presented to the Council of Europe by a member of the Spanish delegation. That member was asked by the Council of Europe to go to Cyprus to find out the number of settlers coming from mainland Turkey to the northern part of Cyprus.

According to that member's report, which is published today—the figures have been given by people in Mr. Denktash's Administration—in 1974, 115,600 people living in northern Cyprus were regarded as Turkish Cypriots. In 1990, the figure given was 171,500 people. In view of that substantial increase, we are entitled to ask who the thousands of extra people living in northern Cyprus are.

I put it to the Minister that those sheer numbers alone have sadly damaged the chance of finding an acceptable solution. We face the problem of what will happen to the people who are now living in northern Cyprus even though they have no basic rights to residency in that part of the island. They were brought there by Mr. Denktash to strengthen his position with the full support of Ankara. It would be interesting to hear exactly what is the Government's view on that point.

For many years, the Americans sadly showed little interest in Cyprus. In February this year, I and other Members of Parliament went to Washington specifically to discuss the situation in Cyprus. To the credit of the Americans, they now obviously wish to see a settlement. We met senior politicians and members of the Administration. They made it clear that they wished to see a settlement in Cyprus. They also said, "If only the British Government would back us up in the kind of settlement that we want, progress could indeed begin." They were highly critical of the lack of meaningful support from the British Government for the efforts of the American Administration in their discussions with not only Mr. Denktash but most especially the Government in Ankara. I will be interested to hear exactly what the Minister says in reply to that comment.

Over the years, I have often asked in the House what the Government's policy was, always to be told, "We support the United Nations." I put it to the Minister that, while I and, I am sure, all Members of the House welcome that, it is no longer sufficient for the Government simply to say that they support the efforts of the United Nations.

The question was asked this morning why a senior Minister from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office had not visited the island of Cyprus. Will such a visit be considered in the next few months? It would clearly show both sides in Cyprus and the Governments of Turkey and Greece that Great Britain is as committed as the Americans to a meaningful settlement of the tragedy of Cyprus.

Are we at long last to pressurise—again I use the word "pressurise"—both Mr. Denktash and Ankara for meaningful reductions in the number of Turkish troops stationed on the island? To the credit of Sir Geoffrey Howe, a former Member of the House, he always said to the many hon. Members who met him over the years that it would be common sense for both Turkey and Mr. Denktash sizeably to reduce the number of Turkish troops. Sadly, that has never taken place. Will we put pressure on both Mr. Denktash and Turkey to do so? Are we to see Famagusta opened up as a city? Again, that would give hope in Cyprus.

I come to my final point; I am aware of the time. One of the great problems that we in the House who work for a settlement in Cyprus have always experienced is that,

when we seek to hold meetings of Turkish and Greek Cypriots, people who are opposed to Mr. Denktash face enormous problems in being allowed to leave northern Cyprus to come here. If Mr. Denktash really wants a settlement, surely it is common sense to allow Turkish Cypriots to meet Greek Cypriots so that they can discuss their vision for a united Cyprus. As I said, I am in no doubt that many Turkish Cypriots want a settlement. Until Mr. Denktash allows those people to leave Cyprus, it would be better for them to meet in Cyprus, which is their home. Mr. Denktash will never give them permission to go to the south of the island. That is crucial.

The British Government have had a long involvement with Cyprus, for historic reasons. We are entitled to seek much greater involvement of the Government in the long-running tragedy of Cyprus, because I and many hon. Members wish to see an honourable settlement that benefits both Greek and Turkish Cypriots. That is where their home is. We should help them to develop what, in a short space of time, could become one of the most prosperous islands in the world. They have enormous potential which, sadly, has not been developed over the past 18 years. Let us hope that, in the coming years, there will be the movement and the development that will bring great pleasure not only to Cyprus but to many hon. Members.

1.20 pm

Mr. David Evans (Welwyn Hatfield): I want to add my congratulations on your appointment, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I wish you well. I wish also to congratulate my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on his stunning victory on 9 April. Further, I congratulate all the people of Welwyn Hatfield who so wisely voted Conservative yesterday and ousted the Labour district council from power for the first time since 1979. That gives me great pleasure.

Europe was prominent in the Queen's Speech, as was the Asylum Bill. The British people rejected the Labour party, and they do not want to be governed by civil servants in Brussels, champagne socialists in Strasbourg or bankers in Bonn. The vast majority of men and women want to be ruled by this country, not by faceless bureaucrats across the channel. The political union with which they feel comfortable is the nation state, not a super nanny state or part of a federal Europe.

Many people regard nationalism as a dirty word; I do not. It is what binds people together. It provides people with a collective sense of destiny through a common past and a vision of a common future. A nation's personality is forged through its history and that evokes powerful bonds of solidarity.

The world is made up of more than 100 nation states, and two of the most effective models of economic development over the past 30, 40 or 50 years have been Japan and the USA. They have powerful national personalities. By contrast, large multinational states appear to be in perpetual difficulties—for example, the former Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, India and Nigeria.

In Asia, it is the small states that are forging ahead economically, such as Taiwan, Singapore, Hong Kong and South Korea. They quite rightly feel no need to pool their currencies or to form a federal union—a point that appears to be lost on Jacques Delors, on the Opposition and, I am sorry to say, on some of my colleagues.

Delors said in 1988:

"We will not be able to take all the decisions that need to be taken between now and 1995 without moves towards a European Government of one kind or another. In 10 years time 80 per cent. of economic and perhaps even fiscal and social legislation will originate in the Community."

I can only say, "God help us." We will not tolerate socialism through the back door. It is certainly not what the founding fathers of the Community had in mind, never mind what Conservative Members have in mind.

Although the treaty of Rome speaks of an ever closer union among the peoples of Europe, it is clear from the bulk of the document that, while that aim is political and social, the chief means were to be economic. Economic integration can create prosperity, but it should not be used as an excuse for an act of grand larceny against British sovereignty. The plans to extend the jurisdiction of the already bloated Brussels Commission, the Parliament of Strasbourg and the Luxembourg court are ridiculous. The result will be excessive bureaucracy and bad laws. We can all prosper without the social charter telling us what time we should go to bed.

The common agricultural policy shows us the dangers of allowing the corporatist notions of the Commission to override free market policy. The common agricultural policy accounts for two thirds of the entire Community budget and costs the average European family of four £1,000 a year. We in Britain, as the electorate have displayed on four successive occasions, are acutely aware of the need for less government, less taxation and greater competition, so it is nonsense to sanction the establishment of a highly centralised political union with a powerful federal government in Brussels dictating economic and social priorities to enfeebled member states.

We have seen since Maastricht what can happen in Germany, France, Belgium and Italy. We are the nation with a secure Government. We need no longer listen to what Kohl and Mitterrand are saying. They are dead meat. They are dead in the water: let us not forget that. Europe, east and west, is too diverse, too large and sophisticated, to lend itself to central control. We in Britain have our own traditions and ways of doing things. Europe's prosperity has been built on the nation state. Our success has been due to diversity rather than to administrative and political unity.

We require a union of free states, co-operating as closely as possible, to maintain peace and to ensure economic prosperity. That arrangement should not impinge on issues that are best decided in this House. The EC should learn to keep its nose out of matters that concern United Kingdom national borders. Within two years, perhaps sooner, people will be able to travel freely from one Community country to another. Travellers from all member states will no longer pass through customs.

The Commission further believes that there should be no systematic control of travellers between Community countries, even for the purpose of distinguishing between EC citizens and other nationals. The Commission believes that it should not be necessary for United Kingdom authorities to have any control over a passenger arriving in London from, say, New York, having changed planes in Paris.

Such freedom of movement will work only if the Community can maintain credible external frontiers. This is clearly a matter that the Commission has not thought through. If foreign nationals can enter the country freely

[Mr. David Evans]

and without control, and are legally entitled to stay here for, say, only a short time, how shall we ensure that they leave? The police and immigration authorities will no longer be able to rely on spotting potential trouble at the border.

To combat the problem, the Commission suggests the greater sharing of information between member states, increased co-operation and large fines on companies employing illegal immigrants. Those are the sort of useless, head-in-the-sand solutions put forward by the Labour party. People who enter Britain under false pretences are, on the whole, never heard of again. They become absorbed in the work force and start a new life, often at the taxpayer's expense. The Commission's attitude is at best complacent and at worst negligent.

Statistics show that the population of Europe in the 19th century was one third of the world's population. By 2025, it will be only 6 per cent. The population of the five main southern Mediterranean countries—Morrocco, Tunisia, Algeria, Egypt and Turkey—which used to stand at a ratio of 1:3 against western Europe, will soon stand at 2:3. Growing numbers of people in those countries, frustrated by their lives at home, will simply try to move to western Europe.

Germany wants immigration and refugee matters to pass to the Commission. That is hardly surprising, because Germany is the major destination of people seeking asylum. It received 200,000 applicants last year alone, and the right to asylum is formally guaranteed in its constitution. Unable to win all-party agreement for changes in asylum rights, Kohl hopes that the EC may break the deadlock by taking immigration policy out of German hands and giving it instead to the Community institutions.

If there is a final right of appeal in immigration cases in the European Court, the Home Office will no longer have the final say over deportations. In contrast, the United Kingdom has instituted a hard but fair immigration system. There is no reason why we should relinquish our sovereignty on the issue because of difficulties encountered in Bonn. Far from capitulating, we should strengthen our internal safeguards against bogus asylum seekers. I stress the word "bogus", because genuine asylum seekers will always be welcome in the United Kingdom, as is our tradition. But cheats will not.

The number of people applying for asylum in the United Kingdom has risen dramatically, from 5,000 in 1988 to nearly 50,000 last year. The problem is made worse by the disturbing reduction in the percentage of applicants who are recognised as refugees under the conditions laid down in the 1951 United Nations convention on refugees. From 1979-83, on average, 60 per cent. of applicants complied with the benchmark. Last year, the figure went down to 25 per cent.

We need to worry not about legitimate asylum seekers but about those who come here on a visit, to become students, or to visit parents or friends, and who have no intention of leaving. Those are the men and women we seek to stop. They are freeloaders, eager to maintain the good life that they have experienced on their vacation. They seek to circumvent immigration rules and procedures passed and approved by the House, thus putting a huge strain on the resources of the United Kingdom Immigrants Advisory Service.

As a result, only 4,000 decisions were made in 1990 compared with more than 7,000 in the previous year. That discrepancy arises because of the problems of handling increasing numbers of bogus applications. The overall backlog now runs at 60,000 cases, which hurts genuine applicants whose proper assimilation into this country is then delayed because we cannot decide whether those 60,000 people should be here.

It is worth remembering that, despite the Opposition's scandalous smears, the Government have made it perfectly clear that, as a signatory to the United Nations convention, they will not return refugees to countries where they fear persecution. However, since 1975, the number of applicants for asylum in Europe has doubled every three years. More than 500,000 applied in 1991, and who knows what the figures will be in 1992-94? Millions of east Europeans—7 million from Russia alone—seek visas to come to the west.

Mr. Tony Banks: Not to come here.

Mr. Evans: The hon. Gentleman says not to come here, but 800,000 of them want to come here. Who can blame them? They want to taste the good life. Let us not forget that 75 per cent. of asylum seekers already live here. They have come here for their holidays and want to stay and sign on—no problem. There is increasing evidence of multiple applications being made for benefits—129 were recently made by one person. False identities are being assumed for the purpose of making fraudulent social security claims, which are estimated at 100 million. That number may be 500 million or even 1,000 million, who knows?

Mr. Tony Banks: It could be two trillion.

Mr. Evans: It could be—no one knows.

Mr. Banks: Least of all the hon. Member for Welwyn, Hatfield (Mr. Evans).

Mr. Evans: I shall conclude now, as I think that other Members wish to speak.

Faced with such problems, the Government are right to commit more resources and speed up the scrutiny procedures for asylum seekers. I was delighted to learn from the Gracious Speech that the Asylum Bill is to be revived. In addition, I recommend that the Government should consider extra measures for inclusion in the final legislation.

Thousands of people come to Britain under false pretences, never to return to their country of origin. Those families draw social security benefits to which they have made no contribution. Would it not be a good idea if asylum seekers and their families received no state benefit until they had paid five years of taxes? Applicants should be placed in secure accommodation, not allowed to leapfrog people who have been waiting for houses for years. Many constituents who see that happening become upset.

Applicants should be placed in accommodation while their claims are being considered, not in permanent residences. It may be worth commissioning disused army camps for the purpose. I hope that the Government will

consider introducing a moratorium, and not allowing anyone into the country for two years so that we can deal with the 60,000 backlog.

We must not become the dumping ground for the world's freeloaders and bogus asylum seekers. We are a compassionate nation, but we should not allow our immigration policy to become a joke throughout the world. At present, people are told, "Get to the United Kingdom where you will be paid £100 a week for doing nothing." We taxpayers are not prepared to foot that bill now or in the future. Charity begins at home.

1.37 pm

Mr. Piara S. Khabra (Ealing, Southall): I congratulate you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on your appointment.

I was amused to hear the speech of the hon. Member for Welwyn Hatfield (Mr. Evans) and thought that he was going to ask me whether I could produce my passport.

I have been in this country since 1959. I pay tribute to my predecessor. We used to be great friends, but when we finally parted company we were no longer friends. Ealing, Southall has been a Labour constituency since the end of the war in 1945. I am proud and privileged to represent a constituency in the west of London, part of which has been known as the queen of suburbs. It has a unique character; it is international, with constituents from all over the world. It is multicultural, multilingual and multi-faith.

During the past almost 30 years, my constituency has, independently, made much progress and, in the past 13 years, it has received no support from the Tory Government. For many years, my constituency has contributed to the development of the economy.

My constituents will not tolerate racism of any kind. In 1979 my constituency hit the international headlines. The then Home Secretary will recall that there was some social unrest there, and that many people were arrested, charged and sentenced. Now, people of all races live together there in peace and harmony and there is no place for racists in the constituency. My constituents are united in their determination not to let the National Front or any other racists enter the constituency. We have the strength to resist racism; my constituency is proud of being multicultural.

Many jobs have been lost in the constituency in the past five or six years due to the policies of the Government, who encouraged industry to move out of the area and to relocate in cheaper areas. Thousands of people have been affected and many of them have lost their jobs and their homes because they could no longer pay the mortgages. Many have become homeless, and businesses have collapsed because of Tory policies.

The Tories have been telling the country that the recession will end, and my constituents have been waiting for that end. But it does not seem to be ending and many people are worried that they will lose their jobs, that they will be unable to educate their children properly or afford good medical care for them. For instance, the Government have encouraged schools to opt out. I am pleased that some of the schools in my constituency have not opted out, although some have. I am not in favour of education only for those who can afford it, or of selective education. Education should be the responsibility of the state and of democratically elected local authorities.

For some years I have been trying to unite the community, and I have been successful, in that the indigenous and the ethnic minority communities have been living in peace. I have noticed over a period of 20 years that the Tories have failed to encourage ethnic minority communities to stand on their own feet, to develop their own businesses and to enjoy a good standard of living.

I have also noticed during the past year that the Government have tried to change the criteria for section 11 funding. As a result, people have suffered; colleges have closed and good courses have been lost. My constituents feel deeply distressed by that.

I do not intend to discuss problems of an international nature today, but I will point out that I was born in India before it was divided. I lived through the period of riots in India which were caused by the British Government's colonial policy. Millions of people were murdered and there were race riots. The division of India in 1947 was also the result of Britain's colonial policy. Initially, two states were created and we later saw the creation of another.

I do not favour fundamentalist politics: I stand for secularism and democracy. I would not like this country to interfere in the affairs of any sovereign, independent country, but I hope that Britain will do what it can to bring parties together to address issues such as those that exist in Kashmir. That matter must be sorted out by Pakistan and India and Britain should not interfere in any way, directly or indirectly.

Human rights issues arise in many parts of the world and they also arise in this country. I enjoy being a Member of Parliament and hope that I shall learn more and more and will be able to contribute to future debates. I intend to be fully involved in the politics of this country.

1.46 pm

Mrs. Ann Clywd (Cynon Valley): I join hon. Members who have congratulated you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We look forward to your long tenure in the Chair and admire your natty style in ties. I also congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, Southall (Mr. Khabra) on an erudite and well-balanced maiden speech which was far more typical of the majority view of Britain's people than that of the hon. Member for Welwyn Hatfield (Mr. Evans), who has now left the Chamber and who sounded as though he was suffering from a bad bout of indigestion and too much reading of *The Sun*. We look forward to many speeches from my hon. Friend the Member for Southall, who spoke about tolerance and the richness of the multicultural community that he represents.

I also congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Ilford, South (Mr. Gapes) whose vast experience of foreign affairs will be of considerable benefit to the Opposition. We look forward to much participation by him in debates of this kind. He noted that the commitment to NATO was not accompanied by support for the kind of defence and security policy review that was sought by so many of our allies at the end of the cold war.

My hon. Friend the Member for Tooting (Mr. Cox) made his usual passionate plea for settlement of the Cyprus question. Like all of us who have taken a particular interest in Cyprus and have visited that country several times, I join him in calling for the Government to play a more proactive role.

For 13 years, massive cuts in Britain's aid spending, a lack of real action to tackle the debt crisis, a refusal to address the deterioration in the terms of trade for the poorest countries, and laggardly support for key

[Mrs. Ann Clywd]

international institutions have contributed to the growth of poverty and the impoverishment of many nations. The programme outlined in the Gracious Speech does nothing to change those divisive and damaging policies. The programme fails to address the fundamental challenges confronting the world. It provides no indication of how Britain can improve its contribution to the creation of a more just, equitable and prosperous world.

An increasingly interdependent world needs Governments who care about all the world's citizens. We need a Government with vision who are willing to take action to eradicate poverty and conflict and to promote peace, and who will work for human rights and for development and environmental protection. The Labour party would have provided that vision if it had won the general election.

The gap between the rich and the poor nations has doubled in the past 30 years. The richest fifth of the world population now receive 150 times the income of the poorest fifth. How can any country that fails to make that a top priority in foreign policy claim concern for global security or for humanity? How can we stand idly by when every 2·4 seconds of every day throughout the year a child dies somewhere in the world because of poverty? The challenges of global warming, AIDS, refugees, terrorism, wars, civil strife and the drugs trade know no boundaries. They confront us all. As Susan George so aptly commented,

"there may be a first and third class on the Titanic, but we all have the same need to navigate away from disaster."

The Conservative manifesto for the general election mentioned "taking responsibility for Britain". It failed, however, to articulate any concept of Britain's international obligations. As a result, the Conservative party's programme for government is weak. It is lacking in substance and vision and it is fundamentally dishonest.

I intend to concentrate on some specific areas, and I shall begin with aid. Successive Conservative Governments have refused even to set a timetable to meet the United Nations aid target of 0·7 per cent. of gross national product. Only a couple of days ago, the United Kingdom was blocking a plan for EC member states to pledge 0·7 per cent. by the year 2000. The Gracious Speech tells us that the

"Government will maintain a substantial aid programme".

The same hackneyed phrase was used in 1991, 1990, 1989, 1988 and 1987. It has been used every year from as far back as 1981 the same rhetoric, the same clichés, the same old story.

In 1979, the Conservative downgraded the Ministry of Overseas Development and replaced it with the Overseas Development Administration, an annex to the Foreign Office, and the marginalisation of development issues in Government decision-making continues. Instead of promoting world development at a time when it is essential to do so, the Prime Minister has demoted overseas development by refusing to have the Minister for Overseas Development in the House of Commons, let alone in the Cabinet. He cannot give two thirds of the world an extra 10 minutes a month for ODA questions. That is how much he cares.

In the past 13 years the aid budget has been cut by 17 per cent. in real terms. Last year, the Minister for Overseas Development told the House that she did not like it any more than anyone else, but she failed to do anything to prevent cuts taking place. There was no principled resignation. Instead, there was just hot-footing it down the corridor, only days after being rejected by the voters of Wallasey, to wrap herself in ermine while pontificating on the poverty of two thirds of humanity. I ask right hon. and hon. Members to imagine two pictures: first, the poverty, stench and squalor of a Delhi slum; secondly, a noble Lady, ermine clad, in a glittering, tiara-d and perfumed other place, presiding over a massive decline in Britain's aid budget.

Mr. David Howell: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Mrs. Clwyd: From being the second largest donor of the seven major industrial countries in 1979, we are now the second smallest. As a percentage of GNP, our aid is now the lowest ever on record at just 0·27 per cent.—what a disgrace. *[Interruption.]* Conservative Members who are muttering should feel ashamed that our overseas aid is at its lowest level ever. If the Government had maintained aid at 0·51 per cent. of GNP, as it was under the last Labour Government, people in Africa and Asia would be better off by more than £10 billion today.

Mr. Hurd: It is the hon. Lady who should be ashamed at making such a personal attack. I have never heard her say such a thing before. I can only assume that she is jealous of the reputation that, as she well knows, my right hon. Friend Lady Chalker has built up, especially in Africa where my right hon. Friend is well known, respected and loved.

Mrs. Clwyd: Unfortunately, the electors of Wallasey did not love Lady Chalker enough to elect her to the House. It is a disgrace that a Minister who is, or should be, accountable for one of the large-spending Department budgets—as large as the budget of the Department of Trade and Industry—is not here in the House of Commons to answer for that budget and for her policies. The Foreign Secretary's feeble defence of that position is just not good enough.

Sadly, not only the quantity but the quality of aid has been cut in the past 13 years. Commercial considerations have taken priority over poverty reduction. In 1989, only 2 per cent. of Britain's bilateral aid to Africa was used to meet local costs. We should be able to improve that ratio and boost development through increased trade. For many countries, an increase in carefully targeted assistance would greatly benefit millions of people.

In the Horn of Africa, there are now more than 23 million people facing severe food shortages. In southern Africa, the effects of the worst drought for 50 years and of famine are undermining recent progress towards peace and democracy in Zambia, in Angola, in Mozambique and in other countries. Increasing Britain's contribution to food aid and transportation assistance, ensuring that the EC implements its proposals for 680,000 tonnes of food aid rapidly and efficiently and ensuring that the UN is given every encouragement and sufficient funds to promote food security and peace, and to protect refugees are just some of the measures urgently needed.

An immediate reversal of the Government's decision to boycott the second special programme for Africa of the International Fund for Agricultural Development, one of the few programmes effectively addressing the long-term causes of famine by working with poor farmers, especially

women, and addressing environmental problems is also urgently required. Why will the Government not reconsider their decision not to fund that programme? Surely it is one of the best ways to prevent famine in future.

With regard to debt and trade, according to the United Nations Development Programme between 1983 and 1989 the poorest countries in the world paid to us, the rich, $242 billion more than we gave them in aid. Who would have believed that a country such as the Philippines, which in 1990 received $1·3 billion in aid, paid back more than twice that amount in debt service? In 1990, Britain took more in debt repayments from third-world countries than it gave in aid.

The Government have made a lot of noise about their proposals for debt reduction—the Trinidad terms. However, it is worth bearing it in mind that even if the initiative had been implemented fully—it has not been—in line with the original proposal, it would have resulted in only 1 per cent. of total third-world debt being written off. Even that very limited proposal has not been implemented fully. What about the other 99 per cent? Perhaps the Minister will tell the House which countries have benefited from the Trinidad terms and the corresponding amounts of debt that have been written off. The Government have refused to take any steps to encourage the cancellation of debt owed by poor countries to the commercial banks. They have blocked proposals for reducing debt owed to the European Community. They have refused to take action to reduce debt owed by the poorest countries to other multilateral agencies.

For many poor countries, trade is as important as the problem of debt, and certainly more important than aid. One might have expected that a Government who claim to be concerned about security in the world, and a country that has many historic and continuing links with the poorer countries of the Commonwealth, would be more vigorous in examining the effects on the poorer countries of the Single European Act and the current GATT negotiations. Can the Minister tell us what progress has been made in that direction?

I refer now to development and its impact on the environment. In June, at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, representatives of more than 150 nations and countless non-governmental organisations from around the world will gather in Brazil. The Government's programme makes no mention of the specific additional measures, including additional funds, that the Government will make available to tackle the problems of development and the environment.

Many British people are tired of hearing Government rhetoric about taking a lead on environmental issues. Perhaps the Minister will tell us today exactly what proposals the Government will make to encourage the OECD donor countries to meet the UN aid target, or cancel a greater proportion of debt owed by the poorest countries.

Do the Government have any proposals for enhancing technical assistance for poorer countries? How will they ensure that UNCED agrees a programme that meets the long-term needs of the poorest countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America? What proposals will Britain put forward to ensure that the needs of the poorest—especially women—are high on the UNCED agenda?

Why the deafening silence from the Government after my old colleague Mr. Carlo Ripa di Meana threatens to shun the Rio conference? Is not Ripa di Meana saying what most of the participants from the third world are saying—that unless the rich north is prepared to discuss and fund increasing aid flows from the north to the south, to transfer technologies, to put its own environmental house in order and to dismantle trade barriers, why should the poor south curtail its population, development and growth for the sake of the north's environmental demands? Those are the pivotal questions on which the success of the earth summit rests.

Instead of the easily impressed Baroness Chalker hotfooting it round the world with kings, queens, princes and princesses, why does not she roll up her ermine-trimmed sleeves, go to Washington and thrash out these issues with President Bush?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. I ask the hon. Lady to recognise that, while it is perfectly appropriate for Members of this House to be made the subject of strong political debate, it is not appropriate for those outside the House, especially Members of another place, to be the subject of such treatment.

Mrs. Clwyd: Lest you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, should feel that I have been somewhat flippant in my remarks about the noble Baroness, I should explain that it is because she is in the other place rather than here at the Dispatch Box as an elected representative, taking part——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I hope that I can help the hon. Lady. That point is perfectly acceptable. It is the personalisation of the matter that is not acceptable.

Mrs. Clwyd: Although I do not quite understand that ruling, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I bow to your feelings in the matter. Nevertheless, the lack of a Minister in this House responsible for these matters downgrades the importance of overseas development and is an insult to democratic accountability.

I now refer to the former Soviet Union, and to Russia in particular. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) noted, the Government said little about the former Soviet Union. According to the *Financial Times* yesterday, Russia is to adopt a convertible currency by the end of July, underpinned by a stabilisation fund. Will the Minister confirm that the stabilisation fund, if it were ever used, would have to be repaid by Russia? Has that consideration diluted the conditionality that International Monetary Fund negotiators agreed with Ministers in the Russian Government?

To what extent is the stabilisation fund dependent on the Russian authorities controlling wage and price inflation? Did the discussion on setting up the stabilisation fund include undertakings on the question of food supply arrangements within Russia? To what extent do the Government believe that undertakings given by the Russian Government on wage inflation can be upheld? How does a stabilisation fund for the rouble and for Russia interact with the use of roubles in other members of the Commonwealth of Independent States? Could not irresponsible economic mismangement in other states undermine an agreement with the Russian financial authorities?

Is there any truth in the rumour that the rate of convertibility has been pitched so low to avoid any attempted currency speculation? The IMF agreement raises many questions involving balance of payments

[Mrs. Clwyd]

support or the stabilisation funds. I am surprised that so little information on those important issues has been given to the wider public.

As the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston) said, elections will be taking place in Iraqi Kurdistan against a background of continuing and escalating intimidation from Saddam Hussein. Reference is made in the Gracious Speech to the Government's insistence on Iraqi compliance with UN resolutions. The Foreign Secretary referred to that again today. What are the Government doing to ensure that the Iraqis comply with the resolutions?

The economic blockade of Kurdistan continues. Public officials are not being paid, and much of the area is mined. The Kurds do not have the resources to allow de-mining to take place. The Kurdish representatives whom I met yesterday want to know about the discussions allegedly taking place between the United Nations and Iraq about the potential use of oil revenues. They want absolute assurances that the revenues will not be released unless the UN has total control over their use. They argue that UN resolutions provide for the use of oil money for humanitarian purposes. Therefore, if the money is released, they believe that it should be made available in part to the new Kurdish administration which will be set up following the election. That has implications for the United Nations and its observance of national sovereignty, but perhaps the proposition should be considered.

I wish now to consider international co-operation. A few days ago, Mr. Gorbachev reiterated the need for concerted international action under the aegis of the United Nations to deal with a variety of problems confronting the world. Despite all their talk of supporting the UN, the Government's record has been dismal. It shows a lack of commitment to internationalism.

Since 1979, the Government have cut funding in real terms for key UN agencies including the much-respected United Nations children's fund by 44 per cent., the UN development programme by 57 per cent. and the UN development fund for women by 65 per cent. They withdrew from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation and are still keeping the United Kingdom out of it, despite substantial reforms.

In Europe, the prospect of greater integration and co-operation over the next few years can transform the lives of millions of citizens and ensure that an enlarged European Community becomes a more effective institution in promoting peace, democracy, environment and development world wide. Significant steps could be taken under the British presidency of the Community later this year, but there is little in the Government's programme to suggest that they will take such initiatives.

I disagreed with the Minister's response to my hon. Friend the Member for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell). Human rights must be discussed by all international institutions. The issue cannot be put on and off like a party frock that one takes out of the wardrobe on high days and holidays. It should be an integral part of all our dealings.

The Foreign Secretary tried to persuade us that there is no great difference between the political parties on foreign affairs. In fact, there is a world of difference. The Opposition recognise the importance of human rights and justice and paying more than lip service to them. We recognise the UN's opportunities to resolve conflicts, deal with disasters, promote prosperity and co-ordinate international action to protect the global environment. We believe it to be both morally right and in our common interest to help not only the poor in our own country but the poorer nations of the world. That is a fundamental difference between the Conservative party and the Labour party.

2.10 pm

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones): I join right hon. and hon. Members who have congratulated you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on presiding over a debate for the first time.

I am sure that the House would want me to begin by referring to the two maiden speeches from the Opposition Benches. The hon. Member for Ilford, South (Mr. Gapes) will not object, nor will any of his hon. Friends, when I say that we miss our former colleague, who was a stalwart member of the Defence Select Committee and of the IPU. The hon. Gentleman himself told the House that he will have to tread a careful path between being controversial and boring. He did that with success and modesty. He also showed the House that there is more to Essex man than the rather patronising caricature that we are sometimes given. We look forward to hearing from the hon. Gentleman in future foreign affairs debates.

I congratulate the hon. Member for Ealing, Southall (Mr. Khabra) on his excellent maiden speech. I suspect that his arrival in the House will be part of a growing pattern of members of ethnic minorities coming here, and it will be welcomed by both sides of the House. We are pleased to welcome my hon. Friend the Member for Brentford and Isleworth (Mr. Deva) on this side. We remember his predecessor with affection. I am sure that the whole House will not mind my saying that I hope that, unlike his predecessor, the hon. Member for Southall is not an amateur cartoonist.

The right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) led the debate for the Opposition and reminded the House of the remarkable changes that the world has seen over the past five years. There was an underlying poignancy to his analysis, because I think that he senses that he himself is shortly to be a part of those great changes. He is a great cinema lover. As he "panned across the landscape", "flashed back" and used "close up", if I may use the terms that he used in the chapter titles of his charming book, "My Life in the Silver Screen", I remind him and the House that the last chapter of that book is entitled "Fade Out". In that final chapter he wrote:

> "All the big stars, the last survivors of the days of stardom as it once was, were ageing, with no newcomers to take their places."

I suspect that that is as much a reflection of the Labour party today as it was of the cinema when the right hon. Gentleman wrote that book. As those great changes sweep him aside, we wish him well as he rides off into the sunset —a Mancunian Gary Cooper—leaving our debates behind.

Mr. Kaufman: Far from riding off into anywhere, I have just been re-elected by my constituents with the largest majority ever given to anybody in the history of my constituency. I intend to regard that as a strong base for my activities in the House.

Mr. Garel-Jones: I hope that, when it comes to electing the shadow Cabinet, the right hon. Gentleman's colleagues in the Labour party give him the same warm endorsement as he has been given by his constituents.

The right hon. Gentleman and other right hon. and hon. Members raised several questions, and I shall do my best to answer all of them. Obviously, in the short time available to me, I will not be able to cover every point, but I shall seek to cover the principal ones. The right hon. Member for Gorton and other hon. Members, including my right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell), spoke about the former Soviet Union and what we need to do there both as a country and in the various international groups to which we belong.

A sum of $50 billion of assistance has already been committed to the former Soviet Union, including $24 billion from the Group of Seven. The United Kingdom can claim to have led the way in championing Russia's entry into the International Monetary Fund and the World bank. Indeed, Moscow asked the United Kingdom to co-ordinate its application. Those are substantial commitments. Britain's commitment is a serious one. However, I recognise that, as the right hon. Member for Gorton, my right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford and the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston) implied, we shall have to watch the position carefully.

The right hon. Member for Gorton also referred to nuclear weaponry in the former Soviet Union and to the nuclear weapons policy of the United Kingdom. My right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford is also increasingly anxious about nuclear weaponry in the former Soviet Union and keeps a close watch on it. The Gracious Speech commits Britain to maintaining its minimum nuclear deterrent. Even the Labour party manifesto conceded that Britain needs a minimum deterrent while other countries keep theirs. The old threat has all but disappeared, but risks and uncertainties have taken the place of the manifest threat that we formerly faced.

There are still more than 27,000 nuclear weapons in the former Soviet Union. The House will agree that the best response is to help the former Soviet republics to get rid of their massive surplus before we consider what to do with our minimum deterrent. That is why we have provided Russia with special containers and vehicles for the secure transport of nuclear weapons at an overall cost of £30 million. With our partners in the European Community and the United States, we have set up a centre for former nuclear scientists to be retrained and perhaps redeployed.

The right hon. Member for Gorton and my right hon. Friend the Member for Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson) mentioned Cyprus and Kashmir. The right hon. Member for Gorton upbraided us a little about working in the marginals. I suggest that working in the marginals might in part account for the fact that we are sitting on this side of the House and he is on the other. He was not averse to working in the marginals. Indeed, the hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Vaz) seems to have identified at least four different Labour party positions on Kashmir. I have a number of Kashmiris in my constituency. I take a close interest in the matter. I can assure the hon. Member for Southall that Her Majesty's Government have no intention of interfering. But we stand ready to help if asked to do so by the Governments of India and Pakistan.

As one would expect from the Chairman in the previous Parliament of the Select Committee on Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, my right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford referred to the European Economic Community and the treaty signed at Maastricht which the Government will invite the House to approve through legislation shortly. My right hon. Friend put his finger on the essence of the Maastricht treaty. My right hon. Friends the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary did not achieve a "victory" at Maastricht—one hesitates to talk in confrontational terms. For the past 20 or 30 years, debate in the Community has proceeded on the assumption on which the Liberal party proceeds, that we are moving towards a finalité politique involving a single structure built around a single treaty.

The principal achievement of my right hon. Friends the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary was to prevent the debate from being brought to a conclusion and to open up alternatives for intergovernmental co-operation in foreign policy, security policy and interior justice policy. The hon. Member for Ilford, South made an excellent maiden speech, but I do not agree that we must choose between NATO and the Western European Union. That is not the choice. The choice is to build up a European dimension through the WEU that complements and strengthens NATO.

Picking up the points made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford and the anxieties expressed by my hon. Friend the Member for Welwyn Hatfield (Mr. Evans), I must say that this is not a great battle but an intellectual discussion. What we achieved at Maastricht was the start of turning the tide and the chance to persuade some of our partners to consider the proposition that co-operation in foreign policy through intergovernmental consensus is not qualitatively worse than a decision taken by the Twelve through qualified majority voting on other matters where the Community has competence. That is the banner under which we need to march in the coming three or four years as we move towards 1996.

The hon. Member for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell) made an interesting speech about the Community and I know that he takes a close interest in it. He said—I think that it is official Opposition policy—that he supports the ratification of the Maastricht treaty. Of course, he expressed the doubts and the anxieties of the Labour party, of which the House is well aware, about the total package, in particular the social dimension and regional policy. No doubt, during our debates on the Bill, he and his hon. Friends will make those points.

I congratulate the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber on being returned to this House with the smallest percentage vote of any Member. My right hon. Friend the Member for Brent, North enjoyed teasing the hon. Gentleman on that pleasing irony, as the hon. Gentleman's views on proportional representation are well known to the House. He made an interesting speech and we agree with him about the emerging importance of the United Nations in the affairs that we seek to confront.

There is a matter that is causing my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary some concern, and the House may want to consider it. It is the way in which the large number of institutions to which we belong—the United Nations, NATO, WEU, G7 and so on—need to adjust to the new world that the right hon. Member for Gorton described. The role of those institutions is one to which the Government and hon. Members interested in foreign affairs should pay attention.

[Mr. Garel-Jones]

I am sorry that, briefly, I was not in the House when the hon. Member for Tooting (Mr. Cox) spoke. I am aware of his concern about Cyprus. He and my hon. Friend the Member for Bexleyheath (Mr. Townsend) frequently come to see me about that problem. I can say in all honesty that their concern, the pressure that they exert upon us and the contacts that they have inside Cyprus are of definite assistance in our discussions with the Turkish and Greek Governments and the various parties in Cyprus. We are grateful for the interest that the hon. Gentleman and my hon. Friend take in this matter.

My hon. Friend the Member for Gravesham (Mr. Arnold) made a wide-ranging and interesting speech, to which the House listened with care. He spoke about the events in Peru, but was heckled by the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn). We are concerned about what has happened in Peru and we have suspended the balance of payments assistance that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister promised President Fujimori when he came to this country. While deploring events in Peru, we must recognise the background against which they have taken place. We must do other than beating our breasts. I recall the story of the Duc de Engheim being shot. When told about it, Talleyrand said, in effect, "That is certainly a serious crime but, worse than that, it may have been a mistake."

Those of us who regard ourselves as friends of Peru should tell that country, through the European Community and the Organisation of American States, "It is a mistake. How can we help you to rectify the mistake as soon as possible?" That is what we shall be seeking to do through the Community in its dialogue with Latin American countries at the Rio group meetings.

I am reluctant to respond to the speech of the hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd), not least because it was out of kilter with all the other contributions to the debate—*[Interruption.]* I see a number of her hon. Friends assenting to that proposition. It was a pity that she made that type of speech. *Hansard* should note that fact because we hope that, especially in foreign affairs, that type of attitude will not be taken. I say this in the knowledge that our debates will include banter, and at the outset of my remarks I teased the right hon. Member for Gorton.

I hope that, on reflection, the hon. Member for Cynon Valley will agree that her remarks were unfortunate. As you pointed out, Mr. Deputy Speaker, she is entitled to upbraid the Government, if she considers that to be necessary, for example because the Minister responsible for the area she shadows does not sit in this House. That was a legitimate attack for her to make. As I say, I hope that, on reflection, she will think that the personal way in which she made it was, to say the least, unfortunate.

Further, the hon. Lady took for her remarks more than half the time available for the winding up and reply—time that we were supposed to divide between us. The result is that I shall not be able to answer point by point some of the points that she made.

The Foreign Secretary said that Britain stood in a unique position, being a member of the Security Council of the United Nations, of G7, of the European Community, of NATO, of the WEU, of the Commonwealth and of the Council of Europe. While we must not exaggerate our influence, much of which is now deployed, with others, in the Community, we must not underestimate it. We have a unique position and opportunity. My right hon. Friend said—this is why I upbraided the hon. Member for Cynon Valley—that our debates on foreign affairs need not be a battlefield. Indeed, with the exception of the hon. Lady's speech, today's debate has reflected the atmosphere that

My right hon. Friend said that we relied greatly on the knowledge and experience of hon. Members. We do, and I have spoken of the hon. Member for Tooting, my hon. Friend the Member for Bexleyheath and others who take an interest in Cyprus. Their interest and questioning is of help to the Government. The House is a hard taskmaster for Ministers, and rightly so. My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary takes part in debates, makes statements and appears before Select Committees, and it is right that he should do so. It helps the Government.

I hope that the Government, supported by the knowledge and experience of the House, will not only eschew turning our debates into battlegrounds but will be able to make the desired contribution to bring peace and prosperity to those parts of the world where problems are still dealt with on battlegrounds like those that my hon. Friend the Member for Bexleyheath referred to when he said that his grandfather suffered in Gallipoli and his father in Dunkirk.

It being half past Two o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

Debate to be resumed on Monday 11 May.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at the sitting on Thursday 14th May, the Speaker shall put the Question necessary to dispose of proceedings on the first Ways and Means Motion not later than three hours after their commencement and the said proceedings may be entered upon or continued after the expiration of the time for opposed business.—*[Mr. Robert G. Hughes.]*

Football

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Robert G. Hughes.]*

2.30 pm

Ms. Kate Hoey (Vauxhall): First, I welcome the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for National Heritage to his new responsibility. It is an historic occasion to be speaking in the first debate on matters relating to the new Department of National Heritage. The Secretary of State for National Heritage has been referred to as the Minister for free tickets, but he will know as well as I that in politics there is no such thing as a free ticket, and I am sure that he will remember that.

Today's debate is an opportunity not just to clarify the breadth of the new Department's responsibilities in relation to football but to consider where football stands as we come to the end of the current season, and on the eve of that great showpiece, the FA cup at Wembley. At the end of a season when attendances have been up for the fifth year running, it is ironic that next season fewer people will be able to watch football and will pay more to do so. In one sense, it is the end of an era because we are seeing the break-up of the football league.

The premier league will begin, as predicted by all those concerned about football, as a super league for super television money. That has always been the real intent of those who wanted a premier league. All the grand talk about how good it would be for football is exposed as a sham. There will still be 22 clubs in the premier league, the same congestion of fixtures and no help for our international teams. The premier league will mean fewer professional clubs and fewer professional players.

We thus end the football season with the football league broken up for the sake of sheer greed on the part of a few club chairmen. An extra level of bureaucracy has been created and we are further than ever from restructuring the whole of the management of the professional game, which is so badly needed and which was so admirably suggested in the Professional Footballers Association blueprint for the future of football published last year—the creation of a Football Federation—which I urge the Minister to read closely if he has not already done so. If football is to maximise the support required from the public, the commercial sector and the Government, a restructuring of the whole of the management of the game is essential. For any plan to succeed, it must have the good will of the Football Association, the League and the PFA.

The feuding that has gone on within the football industry has been a feature of life for many years. The conflicting leadership and management at the highest level identifies the need for a more rational and unified approach to the administrative side of the sport. Sadly, the imagination and integrity shown by the PFA is not visible within the FA. The whole attitude of the FA, for example, to the organising of English supporters wishing to attend the European championships in Sweden next month, has been negative. It has extended virtually no co-operation to the football supporters organisations in their attempts to set up an advice and information centre in Sweden along the lines of the successful venture at the world cup in Italy.

The FA has not used the European championship supporters welfare sub-committee in the way it was envisaged. I believe that, between them, the FA and the officials of the Department of Education have managed to confuse supporters completely about the arrangements for Sweden and have created a catalogue of chaos. We now know for certain that the FA asked the Swedish authorities not to co-operate with anyone from the Football Supporters Association. Consequently, a small amount of grant from the Football Trust to the FSA for its work in Sweden has effectively been blocked.

I genuinely urge the new Minister not to act immediately on everything that his officials tell him, particularly those he inherits from the Department of Education. He should balance the advice from them by urgently meeting supporters organisations. He will discover the enormous talent and knowledge within such groups, be it the FSA, the Federation of Football Supporters, other independent sporting organisations or supporters up and down the country who produce football fanzines. I hope that he will listen to such groups because he can learn from them.

I am delighted that we have been awarded the European championships in 1996. However, I do not believe that this country will receive the enormous benefit to be derived from hosting them unless the supporters organisations are handled in a much more positive manner. Such an approach was commended in the Taylor report, but, sad to say, the previous Minister seemed reticent to acknowledge that part of the report.

Once again, I have to criticise the Football Association for its handling of the FA cup final tickets. Tomorrow, thousands of loyal Sunderland and Liverpool supporters, many of whom attended every one of their club's matches last season, will be unable to obtain a ticket for the cup final. They will all be at home watching the match on television, while hundreds of people who have not attended a single football match this season anywhere in the country will be at the final, thanks to the corporate hospitality laid on by companies and to ticket touts.

The FA says that it has undercover agents checking for ticket touting, but it is virtually impossible to prevent even by legislation. The FA could radically change the position by increasing the cup final ticket allocation to clubs. No genuine Sunderland supporter would sell a cup final ticket, so that would be one way of quickly putting a stop to ticket touting at the cup final.

I pay tribute to the work of the Football Trust, particularly its continued support for supporters organisations and the development of women's football in this country. I welcome its grant aid scheme to assist clubs in developing stewarding. That will help to keep down the costs of policing football matches, which amounted to £7 million last season. We must all welcome the way in which the general policing of grounds is improving, due to the much more co-operative support given by police to football clubs and supporters. Indeed, the police often take more account of the supporters organisations than the football authorities.

Probably the most important issue about which, I hope, the Minister may enlighten us today is the Government's position on the Taylor recommendations on developing all-seater stadiums. He will be aware that, during the election period, much was said on the subject. The Prime Minister himself made a statement on the Taylor report, but we need urgent clarification.

The Football Licensing Authority, which is in the difficult position of having to implement not just overall safety at football grounds, but the all-seater stadium requirement, is now in a virtual limbo. It cannot go ahead

[Ms. Kate Hoey]

with the licensing because it does not know how matters stand. There must be further discussion of this issue immediately.

The Minister has a lot of reading to do. I hope that he has read the whole Taylor report. There are many misconceptions about it. It did not say that it is not safe to stand at any football matches. Seventy-two or 73 of its 76 recommendations have already been implemented—measures to do with co-ordination of access, terracing and turnstiles, problems which all contributed to the terrible tragedy. Now we must return to considering whether all-seater stadiums are sensible as a dogmatic approach or whether they are wanted because a few club chairmen want them for reasons other than safety. Some of the first division clubs have moved quickly on all-seater stadiums, even though there was no need to do so, because some of the chairmen wanted to have fewer people paying more at matches and to change the type of person who attends them. We must not allow that to happen.

I hope that the Minister will also read the Football Supporters Association document on the preservation of standing accommodation at football grounds. Those in football who have read this good document properly have all said that it is a worthy effort. It shows that those who support the right to have some standing at all football grounds are not Luddites. This progressive report shows that people do not want to stand just because their forefathers always stood—standing accommodation will also need to be changed. It is not necessarily a cheap solution and it will involve spending money. Terracing needs money spent on it, too.

It is nonsensical for the Prime Minister to say that the Government will reconsider Taylor's recommendations for all-seater stadiums for third and fourth division clubs or for clubs with upper attendance limits. If it is safe to stand at some grounds, it must be safe to stand at all of them. If enough attention had been paid to the Institution of Structural Engineers report—the Minister has a great deal of reading to do on this—which all responsible Ministers, including the former Minister for Sport who wrote to me to say so, thought was a good contribution, the point would have been understood. I assume that the Minister, the hon. Member for Salisbury (Mr. Key), has taken over responsibility from the Home Office for safety at sports grounds, but the former Home Secretary said that he regarded the report as an important contribution towards achieving safety at sports grounds. The report does not, however, state that it is unsafe to stand.

Before we pursue a dogmatic all-seater policy, we must get all the football authorities around the table and ask how we can make our football grounds places to which people want to go and in which they will feel safe and have the facilities that they want. That does not mean all-seater stadiums, but it does mean that we must put safety first. The horrible incident earlier this week involved people who were sitting down, so it is not a matter of sitting or standing but of how people sit or stand.

Tomorrow at Wembley many people will not be able to see from their seats and will spend half their time standing up. That happens at many stadiums, and it shows that all-seater stadiums are not a simple solution.

What is the FLA's responsibility for existing grounds, such as Wembley, as it apparently has responsibility for safety only at new developments? If we are serious about safety, we should look at existing stadiums. All-seater stands will lead to the continuation of small clubs being put out of football. The game has become more fragmented than ever. Admission prices will rise, next year people will be expected to pay about £22 to stand at various clubs and families will no longer be able to afford to take their children to football matches. That is not what people want, and it is certainly not the wish of football supporters to see families precluded by high admission charges.

The Minister has an opportunity which does not often arise. You are in at the beginning of something new. The Department could change the whole nature of our cultural life. I welcome the setting up of your Department and hope that you will use your office and status to bring together people in football. I do not think that your predecessor used his influence to do that. If necessary, you must knock some heads together. Our game must be properly protected and the role of a Minister with responsibility for that must be to see that it happens. I urge you most strongly on behalf of the supporters——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. I should be most grateful if the hon. Lady would remember that the word "you" is not appropriate in the Chamber.

Ms. Hoey: You are fairly new to your position, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I am fairly new to mine, but I appreciate that I should be aware of the House's customs and I apologise. As I was saying, Minister, you have—I am sorry; what nonsensical rules we have to follow in this place.

The Minister has a role and a responsibility which his predecessors did not fully meet. Our game must be protected. Now is the time to think again about the sense of continuing with the dogma of all-seater stadiums. As the *Daily Star* said clearly and loudly, "Stand up for the fans." If the Minister does that, he will do something for the game in this country.

2.47 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for National Heritage (Mr. Robert Key): I welcome my first opportunity to greet you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, from the Dispatch Box and welcome you to your new position. I look forward to many happy hours in your strict care.

I congratulate the hon. Member for Vauxhall (Ms. Hoey) on raising the important issue of the future of football. I thank her for her welcome and commend her attitude to the huge endeavour that my new Department has before it. I hope that we can continue as we have started in the pursuit of excellence in sport. I pay tribute to what has been achieved by the football authorities and the clubs in modernising facilities and improving standards of behaviour on and off the pitch. I shall set out the Government's view on the direction that football might take in future and deal primarily with the position in England. Like my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State, I look forward to our meeting on Monday with the all-party parliamentary group on football under the chairmanship of the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde (Mr. Pendry), who is in his place.

Before dealing with the specific issues raised by the hon. Lady, I shall speak about the place of sport and its priority in the new Department of National Heritage. The

Government remain committed to the well-being of sport in this country, to the improvement of facilities for participants and spectators, to the provision of opportunities for all those who wish to take part in sport and to the achievement of higher standards of performance. Those are key objectives and have a high priority on the agenda of the new Department.

Sports provision will be enhanced by giving it a direct voice in the Cabinet. I am sure that I do not need to remind the hon. Lady that my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State and I are committed supporters of a variety of sports and not all the same ones, which is perhaps just as well. The best-known sports supporter in the Government is, of course, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. I was delighted to learn that the Sports Council, which is the premier voice for sport in England, has welcomed the decision to transfer sport to the new Department. I hope that all will see the transfer as a strengthening of sport's role and a raising of its profile.

In considering the sports role of the new Department, we have decided that it would be appropriate to bring together its general sports responsibilities, including those for the comfort of spectators at sports events, and responsibility for the safety of those spectators, which has hitherto been exercised by the Home Secretary. It has therefore been agreed that my Department should be responsible for all safety at sports ground matters, including the Government's policy on all-seating at football grounds. I should make it clear, however, that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland retains overall responsibility for sport and safety at sports grounds in Scotland.

Turning to more specific football issues, I congratulate the hon. Lady on the timing of this debate following Tuesday's announcement that England is to host the 1996 European championships. It has been a long time since 1966, when we last hosted an international football tournament, and this success bodes well for the future. It reflects UEFA's confidence in the quality of our stadiums, the improved behaviour of our spectators and our ability to organise a successful tournament. I am sure all hon. Members will join me in congratulating the Football Association on this achievement following the most professional bid, which we supported.

Our clubs were readmitted to Europe two seasons ago, largely on the strength of the improvement in spectator behaviour. We are pleased to see that the improvement is continuing this season, despite one or two incidents. The improvements have much to do with the hard work not least by the police, as the hon. Lady has acknowledged, with the benefit of increasing use of closed circuit television, and by the clubs through better stewarding and other measures. The improvements also reflect a change of attitude by spectators, the great majority of whom were always law abiding but whose image was tarnished by a hooligan minority.

We cannot afford to be complacent. We must ensure that there is no regression towards the unacceptable hooligan behaviour that gave football such a bad name among many people in this country and abroad. That is why we supported the legislation introduced last year. I shall, of course, listen to the voices of football organisations, including the supporters. The Government and the FA have sought to involve the Football Supporters Association in discussions about advice centres in Sweden. From what I have learnt, I fear that sometimes it was the FSA that perhaps misrepresented the position of the FA and Government officials, to the detriment of football supporters in general. I hear what the hon. Lady says, however, and I shall listen to the voices of football.

The quality of some of our stadiums has improved immeasurably as a result of the implementation of Lord Justice Taylor's recommendations. I know that before the tragedy at Hillsborough a number of clubs were aware of the imperative need to improve the comfort and safety of the facilities on offer to spectators at their grounds. Those clubs that did not were in a minority, and the Taylor report brought home the message to many clubs that their spectators were entitled to expect high standards. The Taylor report, the valuable work of the Football Licensing Authority and the UEFA club competition requirements of all-seating for high-risk matches from next season and for standing accommodation to be phased out for other matches by the year 2000 have all acted as a spur to clubs to introduce the necessary improvements. We have played our part in assisting in these improvements through the reduction in pool betting duty.

I recognise the remarkable achievements that some clubs have made, with the benefit of Football Trust moneys, in improving safety and comfort in moving towards implementation of the Taylor report. Other clubs, however, have made little or no progress in implementing all-seating stadiums. I have listened carefully to the hon. Lady's views on all-seating provision in football grounds, and we shall continue to listen to all views on the matter, which raises strong feelings among a wide range of football supporters.

I appreciate that, for many, standing at football matches is an integral part of their enjoyment. I have sympathy for clubs in the lower divisions which attract gates of only a few thousand. In looking at the particular circumstances of those clubs, it may not be realistic to expect them to provide the same facilities as those of the big premier league clubs. It may not make sense to close off sparsely populated terraces at some grounds where safety risks may be minimal. On the other hand, clubs in the top two divisions must maintain the momentum towards providing the appropriate level of facilities and comfort which spectators are entitled to expect as we approach the 21st century.

Of course, all clubs need to make their grounds safe. The recent tragic events in Corsica have reminded us of the importance of providing safe facilities. I assure the hon. Lady that if, following the receipt of views and representations, we decide to relax the all-seating requirement, we will make an announcement as a matter of urgency.

I know that there is concern about temporary grandstands at football matches. A revised edition of the "Home Office Guide to Safety of Sports Grounds", the "Green Guide", was published in November 1990 and incorporated the appropriate recommendations of Lord Justice Taylor's final report on the Hillsborough stadium disaster.

Chapter 12 of the guide provides guidance on the use of temporary stands at sporting events. The guide states that although some temporary stands will be erected for a single event only, there is no justification for accepting a lower standard of safety for such structures than elsewhere within the sports ground. In addition, specific advice is given on the siting, assembly and dismantling of temporary stands and structures. The guide also advises

[Mr. Robert Key]

that all temporary stands should be capable of withstanding any load or force to which they may be subjected and that account should be taken of any external factors, such as wind force. Consultation with the local authority and with the fire authority should take place at an early stage.

In this country, temporary stands are commonly used to seat spectators at large golf tournaments. They are also used at a variety of sporting occasions, such as the World Student games staged at the Don Valley stadium in Sheffield in 1991. Temporary stands, in one form or another, are found as frequently at other outdoor events such as circuses, fairs and pop concerts. Advice on the use of temporary seating for temporary structures and places of entertainment which are under cover in otherwise open air situations is given in chapter 13 of the Home Office guide to fire precautions in places of entertainment. The Home Office aims to make regulations and to issue associated guidance in 1993 for all places of work in the open air, which will include temporary stands.

Quite apart from the drive for improvement of stadiums, football is, of course, moving into what I hope will be an exciting new era, with the setting up of the premier league at the start of the 1992-93 season. We believe that there should be co-operation between the Football Association, the premier league, the Football League and the Professional Footballers Association in deciding the development of the game. In all this, the role of the Football Association as the governing body of the game needs to be fully respected.

In addition to improving their facilities, clubs are making much greater efforts to improve their relations with their supporters and taking their views into account. Football in the community schemes are thriving throughout the country and they are an excellent way of bringing clubs, local communities and supporters closer together.

We can be proud of our achievements on the field and the opportunities that lie before English football in Europe. Following England's excellent performance in the 1990 world cup last season, Manchester United won the European Cup Winners cup. Although we have not been able to repeat that level of European success at club level this season, the progress of our representatives has been sufficient for us to earn an extra place in the UEFA cup next season. I send my best wishes to Leeds United, to Manchester United, to Sheffield Wednesday and to the winners of tomorrow's cup final in their European quests next season. More immediately, we can look forward to England's participation in the European championship finals in Sweden in June. Graham Taylor's team is approaching the final stages following a very impressive run of results and I think that we have every reason to be optimistic about the prospects for the team. I wish it every success. I wish the game of football every success in the years ahead.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at two minutes to Three o'clock.

House of Commons

Monday 11 May 1992

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

COMMITTEE OF SELECTION

Ordered,

That Mr. Don Dixon, Mr. Bob Dunn, Mr. Ken Eastham, Sir Marcus Fox, Sir Fergus Montgomery, Sir Michael Neubert, Mr. Ray Powell and Sir Giles Shaw be members of the Committee of Selection.

That the members of the Committee of Selection nominated this day shall continue to be members of the Committee for the remainder of this Parliament.

That this Order be a Standing Order of the House.—*[Mr. Lightbown.]*

Oral Answers to Questions

WALES

InterCity

1. **Dr. Marek:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has had from people in Wales regarding InterCity services to and from Holyhead.

The Minister of State, Welsh Office (Sir Wyn Roberts): May I, on behalf of all hon. Members present, welcome you, Madam Speaker, to the Chair for your first Question Time? May I say also how delighted we are that it is a Welsh Question Time? We hope that our voices will be as sweet to you as yours is to us.

Eighteen representations have been received since revised services were introduced last September.

Dr. Marek: May I echo what the Minister said about you, Madam Speaker? That is as far as it goes. I hope that the Minister will reflect on the fact that he has no mandate whatsoever in Wales where 50 per cent. of people voted Labour, yet he will continue with a colonial Government, introducing poisoned Tory policies which nobody wants.

The Minister should not start privatising the north Wales line to Holyhead; instead will he seek to build it up and to persuade British Rail to introduce a third high-speed train—HST—so that we in north Wales will have five direct services between Holyhead and Euston, which was the case until about a year ago?

Sir Wyn Roberts: On the mandate, I remind the hon. Gentleman that there is only one state in Britain—the British state. We are the Government of that state.

I should have thought that the hon. Gentleman would welcome the privatisation proposals for British Rail, despite the fact that he is one of Jimmy Knapp's henchmen in the House, because they will surely give opportunities to private operators to extend the rail service. Sir Bob Reid, the chairman of British Rail, has promised my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to consider carefully the possibility of introducing a third high-speed train.

Mr. Thurnham: Is my right hon. Friend aware that today is a sad day for anyone from north Wales or the north-west planning to travel by sleeper? Last year, we lost the sleeper service for Liverpool and Holyhead, and this morning I came down on the last sleeper service from Preston. Will my right hon. Friend have a word with the chairman of British Rail and ask him to think again or, perhaps, introduce a private sleeper service to serve those destinations?

Sir Wyn Roberts: Alas, the sleeper service that used to operate on the Holyhead to Euston line was not at all well patronised, but I am delighted to tell my hon. Friend that the Saturday-night, Sunday-morning boat-train service will be reintroduced under the new timetable, starting this week. I can also tell my hon. Friend that the early-morning business service from Holyhead has been elevated to Pullman status. That is very good news.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: Does the Minister agree that, although we are a British state, Wales is a nation and that that nation deserves a Parliament of its own? Does he recognise the great concern in north Wales about the continuation of InterCity services following privatisation, if it is pulled through? Can he say whether his representations with Sir Bob Reid will bear fruit? Are we to have further InterCity services from Holyhead to Euston when the new timetable comes into operation in September?

Sir Wyn Roberts: Wales would lose out badly in more ways than one if it were to have a Parliament of its own.

The matters that the hon. Gentleman mentioned are for British Rail. Although we can make representations to the chairman, as my right hon. Friend has done, the final decisions must be for British Rail. Privatisation will offer fresh opportunities and should therefore cause not concern but rejoicing in Wales.

Mr. Murphy: Whatever the Minister of State's views on a mandate, does he agree that at least 70 per cent. of the Welsh people voted against the privatisation of British Rail? Does he accept that they voted in that way because privatisation will be a threat to our valley and rural lines? What role will he and the Welsh Office play in safeguarding the best interests of British Rail users in the Principality?

Sir Wyn Roberts: The Government are, of course, pledged to support many of the rail services already in receipt of subsidy. The point about privatisation is that it is an oppportunity, not a threat. For example, there is an opportunity in Holyhead to renew the freight service that was abandoned by British Rail and an opportunity for franchises for passenger services. Wales should welcome the privatisation of British Rail.

Local Government

2. **Mr. Denzil Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proposals he has for the reorganisation of local government in Wales.

The Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. David Hunt): May I warmly endorse my right hon. Friend's welcome to you, Madam Speaker, in the Chair for Welsh Question Time?

I refer the right hon. Gentleman to the statement that I made in the House on 3 March. The proposals that I outlined then are now the subject of consultation.

Mr. Davies: Could the Secretary of State be less coy, as the Queen's speech mentioned no legislation on the reorganisation of local government? Does the Secretary of State intend in this Session to legislate on the proposals that he has just put forward?

Mr. Hunt: The right hon. Gentleman should refer to the statement that I made to the House. He will see that the next step is the publication of a White Paper later this year, and legislation will then follow. [Hon. Members: "When?"] As soon as possible. Obviously, in the meantime, there must be continuing consultations with local authority associations. I hope that the right hon. Gentleman can persuade his party to come forward with some positive proposals in reaction to my statement.

Mr. Dover: Does my right hon. Friend accept that many hon. Members in England will be carefully watching his decision-making and that they fully endorse his belief that unitary local authorities are the best? We shall be watching particularly the effect on education in our areas.

Mr. Hunt: Yes. I am glad that my hon. Friend has given me the opportunity to point out once again that the impetus behind unitary authorities for Wales has come from the local authority associations, which presented a united front in seeking unitary status. That has not been the case in England, which gives Wales an unprecedented opportunity to lead the way in local government reform.

Mr. Barry Jones: We welcome you to the the Chair, Madam Speaker. The House has not been noted in the past for equal opportunities, and a great example has been set.

Will county elections take place next year? Councils are now utterly in the dark. Has not the Secretary of State had difficulties, having lost the battle with the Secretary of State for the Environment? We need separate Welsh legislation, and we should not be dependent on England. The Secretary of State is entitled to tell us today that he is not linked to an English timetable. Does he understand that we believe that years of uncertainty now lie ahead and, due to his action, local authorities are in chaos?

Mr. Hunt: Unfortunately, most of what the hon. Gentleman says is based on a series of misunderstandings and misrepresentations. To set the record straight, Wales is on course for separate Welsh legislation preceded by a White Paper. The timetable dates that I outlined before the general election still stand. We are well on course to achieve new unitary authorities in shadow form in 1994, which should be fully operational by 1995.

In the past few days representations have been made to me by some of the county authorities, representatives of which I shall meet later this afternoon. They have said that the county elections should be postponed. That is a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary, but I shall listen carefully to the representations made to me and convey them to my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary.

3. **Mr. Wigley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what discussions he has held during recent weeks with representatives of local government and others concerning his future structure of government in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: I met the Assembly of Welsh Counties on 29 April. I shall meet representatives of all local authorities in Wales later today.

Mr. Wigley: When civil servants from the Welsh Office recently visited Belfast to discuss with the Northern Ireland Office civil servants the work of executive organisations in Northern Ireland, such as the Housing Executive and others, was it with a view to centralise services currently undertaken by local government in Wales? Is the Secretary of State aware of the strong feeling in Northern Ireland that as so many of the responsibilities are carried out by the executive organisations, those bodies must be subject to democratic oversight—a factor which is equally applicable to Wales?

Mr. Hunt: I seek to draw no parallels with Northern Ireland. The Conservative Government's position on devolution was set out clearly during the general election campaign. We do not believe that a separate Welsh assembly would benefit Wales; would mean the setting up of another bureaucratic structure that would come between the people and the Government. Our local government reforms seek to take government closer to the people.

Mr. Rowe: Since I come from part of the United Kingdom where we have to go back at least five elections to find a single Labour Member, I am glad that my right hon. Friend denies the claptrap about mandates. The cost of every reorganisation of local government since the war has been far greater than estimated in White Papers. Will my right hon. Friend make absolutely certain that, whether in Wales itself or throughout the United Kingdom via the knock-on effect, costs are truly worked out before the reforms are undertaken?

Mr. Hunt: I agree with my hon. Friend. I have placed in the Library a copy of the consultants' report on the potential reform of local government in Wales which shows that the reform proposed will be cost neutral. I warmly endorse my hon. Friend's comments.

Mr. Ron Davies: I offer my congratulations to the Secretary of State on retaining his post in the Cabinet, albeit after a little wobble. He should not be seduced by the hon. Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe) as he does have a problem since neither the Secretary of State nor the Conservative party has a mandate from the people of Wales. I hope that he will pay due regard to that factor when piloting the legislation through the House. Is he aware that there is a considerable measure of agreement that there should be change in local government and on the nature of the new local authorities? Will he assure us that when he is in consultation, he will listen carefully to what local authorities and hon. Members representing Welsh constituencies have to say? If he is prepared to do so, he will find that the legislation proceeds through the House more easily.

Mr. Hunt: I readily respond to the hon. Gentleman's comments, although I disregard his first two sentences which I felt were almost ritual. I warmly endorse his last

remarks: I feel that there is a consensus on which we can build. I shall meet the local authority associations in just over an hour. I am ready to meet Opposition Members as and when they are ready to come to see me, which I hope will be as soon as possible.

Mr. Sweeney: Can my right hon. Friend confirm that the Vale of Glamorgan will be one of the new unitary authorities, largely based on present boundaries?

Mr. Hunt: I congratulate my hon. Friend on his magnificent victory in the Vale of Glamorgan—we are delighted to see him here.

In my statement on 3 March I made it clear that the Vale of Glamorgan will be one of the 23 new unitary authorities, but I also said that I was open to further consultation on the boundaries. I look forward to hearing any representations that my hon. Friend may want to make to me on that subject.

Mr. Michael: Does the Secretary of State recognise the inconsistency in his coming to the Dispatch Box to say that he is willing to listen and, at the same time, refusing to listen to what the people of Wales said to him at the general election? Does he recognise that what is needed in the government of Wales is not more quangos but the strengthening of democracy? Will he follow the example of the Labour party, which consulted and listened, and whose policy on this issue commanded support and created consensus in Wales—and won overwhelming support there, as the Secretary of State and his colleagues should recognise? Will he take heed of the consensus that we have created in Wales?

Mr. Hunt: I believe that the only real inconsistency is to be found between the words that we have just heard from the hon. Gentleman and those that we heard a few moments ago from the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies). I hope that the Labour party will be willing to discuss the new unitary authorities—the form that they should take, the way in which their internal management should be organised and the best way in which the services can be delivered—because I believe that there is a consensus. There is no great difference of opinion on the way in which unitary authorities should be introduced. There is a great deal of dissension about the boundaries, but there is an area of agreement about the broad range of local authority functions.

The hon. Gentleman may say that his proposals command widespread support, yet when they were first introduced they were strongly opposed and they were changed as a result—*[Interruption.]* Yes, they were changed a short time ago. I hope that when Opposition Members have had the opportunity to consider the proposals further, the hon. Gentleman will come to see me with his hon. Friends, just as I hope that the leaders of Plaid Cymru and of the Liberal Democrats will, along with my right hon. and hon. Friends. There is an opportunity here for Wales to lead the way in the reform of local government in the United Kingdom.

Neighbourhood Hospitals

4. **Mr. Morgan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what initiatives he proposes to encourage the building of neighbourhood hospitals.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary State for Wales (Mr. Gwilym Jones): It is the work of the health authorities to plan health care facilities, but I give my support to neighbourhood hospitals, for I see them bringing care closer to the people.

Mr. Morgan: I congratulate you, Madam Speaker, on your first Welsh Question Time and I congratulate the hon. Member for Cardiff, North (Mr. Jones), who represents the neighbourhood constituency to mine, on his appointment. If he applies his mind I am sure that he will be able to outshine his predecessor in the role.

Does the Minister accept, from the evidence that we have in Cardiff and in Barry, that there will be a delay of at least a year in the construction of the new neighbourhood hospitals that were supposed to follow on from the demolition of the former St. David's hospital and of the Barry neighbourhood hospital? On top of that there are horrifying reports of the forthcoming closure at Llandough hospital of the children's cancer ward and other wards. Does the hon. Gentleman accept that when it comes to defending the NHS the Tories are nothing more than a bunch of frauds?

Mr. Jones: I must thank the hon. Gentleman for his kind remarks, which he phrased in a way that was typically kind of him.

I understand from South Glamorgan health authority that the neighbourhood hospitals for St. David's and the Neale Kent hospital in Barry are meant to be proceeded with at the earliest opportunity. There is already provision in the all-Wales capital building programme, and in my new responsibilities I look forward to consulting South Glamorgan health authority about exactly that.

I am also aware of the reports to which the hon. Gentleman refers about Llandough hospital and others in South Glamorgan, and I have caused them to be investigated. I have been told that the proposals quoted in the press have not even been discussed with senior management in the health authority, let alone with the health authority itself. By contrast, I suggest that South Glamorgan health authority has an excellent record. In the past year it has increased its number of in-patients by 12 per cent., of day patients by 12 per cent. and of out-patients by 17 per cent. The hon. Gentleman might care to note that and to join me in congratulating the excellent staff in South Glamorgan who are achieving these results.

Mr. Dickens: Will my hon. Friend confirm that record numbers of patients are being treated by the national health service in Wales and that the service there is receiving record funding? Does not this reflect credit on the health service and on the Welsh Office?

Mr. Jones: I am pleased to say that my hon. Friend is quite right. The health service in Wales has a record of excellent achievement and there has been a staggering increase of 227 per cent. in the number of day patients being treated since the Government came to power. My hon. Friend is also right about expenditure. New money this year amounts to £9 per week for every man, woman and child in Wales. That is an excellent record.

High-tech Jobs

5. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what new initiatives he intends to introduce to safeguard high-tech jobs in Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: Through initiatives such as IT Wales and Imperial Park, we shall do our best to ensure that Wales continues to maintained its impressive record of attracting high-technology jobs.

Mr. Flynn: Has the Secretary of State not noticed that the Wales high-tech industry is dying from the head down? On Friday, I watched a £1 million instrument being dumped into a skip at the INMOS—International Metal Oxide Semiconductors—works. That instrument was in production five weeks ago. The managing director has told me that the only reason for the precious 400 high-tech jobs producing the miracle transputer being exported to France and Italy is that the Government have failed to reach a partnership investment deal with the company. When will the people of Wales be able to compete for high-tech jobs like the people of France and Italy? When will he do something to protect the transputer, which is British-made and British-invented but which will be produced in future in France and Italy?

Mr. Hunt: Discussions are continuing with INMOS and I hope that they will reach a successful conclusion. In reply to the hon. Gentleman's general point, I hope that he will visit the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Vale of Glamorgan (Mr. Sweeney) and other constituencies throughout Wales to see the number of high-tech and other jobs, such as those provided by British Airways and General Electric, that are coming to Wales. Those jobs are due to our positive partnership with all the relevant authorities which have come together to attract a high level of inward investment. Since IT Wales started nine months ago, there have been 10 new projects with 2,000 new and safeguarded jobs. That is an excellent record and the hon. Gentleman should not seek to decry it.

Mr. Richards: Does my right hon. Friend agree that Pilkington Communications in my constituency has an outstanding record in this field?

Mr. Hunt: I am glad to have this opportunity to welcome my hon. Friend the Member for Clwyd, North-West (Mr. Richards) and congratulate him on his impressive victory. He is right to highlight the achievements of Pilkington Communications in winning the Queen's award for technology. I also congratulate Peboc of Ynys Môn on its Queen's award for technology. The House should take pride in these achievements.

Mr. Barry Jones: Why does the Gracious Speech make no reference whatever to unemployment? I remind the Minister that 125,000 people in Wales are out of work. There are many high-tech mining jobs in north and south Wales, but the Government plan to privatise the industry means that jobs will come under severe pressure.

Mr. Hunt: I am pleased to be able to announce 10 new industrial projects which are forecast to create more than 460 new jobs involving investment of more than £18 million. That means that during the past week, I have been able to announce 1,000 new jobs for Wales in businesses ranging from automotive components to food processing. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will pay attention to such good news and stop trying to perpetuate the general election campaign in which he so miserably failed.

Dredging

6. **Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he has any plans to meet officials of the Crown Estates to discuss the granting of dredging licences off the south Wales coast.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: My right hon. Friend has no plans at present to do so.

Mr. Griffiths: Will the Secretary of State urgently call a meeting with the Crown Estate Commissioners, because the Swansea bay study group set up by local authorities has commissioned research that shows that, over the past 20 years, the sandbanks off my constituency and those in other parts of Swansea bay have lost more than 80 million tonnes of sand. Those sandbanks are now lower and are contributing to the severe loss of sand and coastal erosion along the south Wales coast. The Crown Estate Commissioners have refused to meet local authorities and I urge the Secretary of State to intervene as a matter of urgency.

Mr. Jones: I am aware of reports suggesting that there has been significant erosion over the past 40 or 50 years. Welsh Office officials are in touch with the Crown Estate Commissioners regarding an examination of those reports. In turn, it might be worth mentioning that the Crown Estate Commissioners have had bathometric surveys carried out of the Nash bank, on which there has been dredging since 1988. Those surveys show very little change in sand levels.

Mr. Donald Anderson: Does the Minister recognise that there is real anxiety in south Wales about the results of erosion, because the effects of dredging are uncertain? Given this uncertainty, will the Welsh Office commission its own report, to allay the deep anxieties that are felt in the coastal areas? Dredging could undermine sea walls and affect substantially the sand levels along the coastlines.

Mr. Jones: The present procedure for considering dredging involves a Government view and it requires that a formal environmental statement be submitted in support of any dredging wherever there is any possibility of significant damage to the marine or coastal environment. All such dredging applications will be considered in that way. Furthermore, that procedure will be reviewed as we continue to seek improvements.

Labour Statistics

8. **Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give the current unemployment rate for *(a)* Ynys Môn, *(b)* Gwynedd and *(c)* Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Unemployment rates for the Ynys Môn constituency are not available. At March 1992, the unadjusted unemployment rate in Gwynedd stood at 10·9 per cent. The figure for Wales was 9·7 per cent.

Mr. Jones: The Minister will be aware that Ynys Môn has suffered considerable job losses in recent months—for example, those at Anglesea Aluminium, Sealink Stena and the Wylfa power station—and the closures of the

Budenberg factory at Amlwch and of the United Meat Packers plant at Gaerwen. Will the Minister assure the House that the Government are doing everything possible to create jobs in Ynys Môn and Gwynedd and that Gwynedd can expect its fair share of inward investment in the coming months?

Sir Wyn Roberts: I am happy to give the hon. Gentleman that assurance. I am sure that he will welcome our announcement today that a major company, Golden Food Products, is expanding at Llangefni in his constituency, creating 38 new jobs. Furthermore, it is planning to spend £3·5 million over a three-year period in expanding that operation. As to the situation generally, I have great faith in the fact that Ynys Môn is a development area and that the Welsh Development Agency, the training and enterprise council and the urban renewal programme are being activated in that area.

Bus Deregulation

9. **Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on his bus deregulation policy and the effects it is having on Tredegar.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The Government's policy has ensured free and fair competition in a deregulated bus industry. Traffic congestion in Tredegar followed the closure of the bus station owned by the former National Welsh Omnibus Co. The problem has been alleviated by the local highway authority which is responsible for such matters.

Mr. Smith: Does the Minister accept that when bus privatisation was introduced it was accompanied by the promise that there would be a cheaper, more efficient and cleaner service? In Tredegar, however, the bus company has gone into receivership. Does the right hon. Gentleman accept that that has resulted in an inferior service and that there are major safety problems, especially for senior citizens? Buses continue to park in a busy shopping complex. Will the Minister show his commitment to the valley, and especially to Tredegar, by visiting the community to try to resolve the problem of the shopping centre, which has gone into receivership as well? Tredegar, which was once a proud town, is now a sad place to visit.

Sir Wyn Roberts: May I give a special welcome to the hon. Gentleman, who is not unknown to us as a Member of the European Parliament? He stands in the shadow of a great oak—his predecessor, Michael Foot. I am well aware of the situation in Tredegar, which has suffered from traffic congestion as a result of subsidence. I understand that Blaenau Gwent borough council has commissioned a report, which we shall consider. Traffic management is a matter for the local highway authority —in this instance, Gwent, which has taken steps to alleviate the problem. The former National Welsh Omnibus Co. was placed in receivership and the decision to close the local bus station was one entirely for the receiver.

Labour Statistics

10. **Mr. Jonathan Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what are the latest unemployment figures for Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: I welcome my hon. Friend after his tremendous achievement at Brecon and Radnor. I give him the statistic that in March this year seasonally adjusted unemployment in Wales fell to 122,500.

Mr. Evans: Does my right hon. Friend agree that one reason why he was able to make the historic announcement that unemployment in Wales on a seasonally adjusted basis had fallen for the first time to the national level was the return of confidence that was brought about by record inward investment to Wales? I invite my right hon. Friend to congratulate my constituents on the inward investment that their part of Wales has attracted. It was announced last week in Ystradgynlais that Lucas SEI and Sumitomo would be creating 500 jobs.

Mr. Hunt: I agree with my hon. Friend that that was a very welcome announcement. The joint venture between Lucas SEI and Sumitomo is to be welcomed warmly. That announcement, the announcement by Original Bradford Soapworks of Rhode island on the creation of a major investment project in Alyn and Deeside—I was able personally to welcome the United States managing director on Friday—and today's announcement means, as I have stressed, that more than 1,000 new jobs are forecast for Wales. That will come on top of the previous record levels of inward investment. This is a record of which everyone in Wales has a right to be proud. We are very much top of the premier league for inward investment, and we intend to stay there.

Dr. Howells: Although everyone welcomes the announcement of new jobs, does the Secretary of State agree that much has to be improved in the way in which we carry out training and retraining in Wales? Does he understand that the Auditor-General's recently published report on the abysmal performance of an unnamed training and enterprise council in Wales is a signal that we must apply ourselves to the training and retraining of the long-term unemployed, as well as merely servicing high-tech employers in south Wales? What will the right hon. Gentleman do about the long-term unemployed in south Wales?

Mr. Hunt: I agree with the hon. Gentleman that perhaps the greatest challenge facing Wales in the 1990s is to ensure that high skills are available to supply new investors with the level of skilled technology that they will need. I have great confidence in the TECs in Wales which formed the first network of such councils to be set up in the United Kingdom. I believe that the councils are rising to the challenge, but the hon. Gentleman is right to say we must concentrate on policies that will ensure the level of skilled labour for which employers will look in the 1990s.

11. **Mr. Simon Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the level of employment in Wales in *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1992.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The civilian work force in employment in Wales for March 1979 was 1,140,000. The figure for the latest available date, December 1991, was 1,147,000.

Mr. Coombs: I welcome my hon. Friend to his new position on the Front Bench and I wish him well. I wish to point out to the House the improvement in the level of employment in the Principality over those 13 years, which

is very much to be welcomed. Will my hon. Friend confirm that the latest Welsh survey of industrial development trends shows that there is a new growth of confidence in the Principality—clearly, as a result of the Government's policies? Does not that trend seem fit to continue as we come out of the recession generally across the United Kingdom?

Mr. Jones: I thank my hon. Friend for his kind remarks. He is absolutely right in the general thrust of his question. There is exactly the right combination in Wales —falling unemployment, falling inflation, falling interest rates and, significantly, a reducing pay differential against United Kingdom pay rates. That suggests confidence in the Welsh work force and the Welsh economy. As my hon. Friend says, I am sure that Wales will lead the United Kingdom out of recession.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Serious Fraud Office

27. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Attorney-General what new initiatives he is planning to take in relation to the work of the Serious Fraud Office.

The Attorney-General (Sir Nicholas Lyell): Under its new director, it remains the objective of the Serious Fraud Office to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of its work in investigating and prosecuting serious and complex fraud.

Mr. Skinner: When will the Attorney-General or the fraud squad do something about investigating Olympia and York, the Canary wharf developers? Is it not a scandal that that company owes $12 billion and is in hock to the banks, yet the banks—just as with Maxwell—are lending it money to keep it afloat? Is it not despicable that the Government, through the President of the Board of Trade and Government Departments, are bailing out that company? Is it not time that instead of handing a lifeline to that squalid venture, the Government sent in the fraud squad to investigate?

The Attorney-General: Before people throw fraud allegations around lightly, they should have some evidence. Not every business that goes into liquidation or has financial problems is fraudulent. If the hon. Gentleman has any evidence, he should take it to the police.

Mr. Bermingham: Does the Attorney-General agree that there is a serious risk in fraud cases because the large ones go to the Serious Fraud Office and the smaller ones to local police fraud divisions, leaving a growing gap of cases involving sums of between £1 million and £3 million that no one seems keen to investigate or that no one has the resources to investigate? Should not adequate funds be made available to prosecuting authorities to investigate all cases of fraud?

The Attorney-General: In addition to the 60 or so cases on the caseload of the Serious Fraud Office, a substantial number are being professionally and skilfully investigated by the fraud investigation group of the Crown prosecution service, and I draw the hon. Gentleman's attention to them.

Pension Funds

28. **Mr. Winnick:** To ask the Attorney-General when he last met the Director of Public Prosecutions to discuss criminal proceedings against companies alleged to have misappropriated pension funds.

The Attorney-General: I meet the Director of Public Prosecutions frequently, but she is not currently prosecuting any such companies. The Serious Fraud Office is investigating or prosecuting a number of cases concerning pension funds.

Mr. Winnick: Is it not extraordinary that no prosecutions have so far occurred relating to the way in which so many pensioners in the Maxwell companies have been swindled out of their pension rights and entitlements? That is quite unacceptable—*[Interruption.]* I do not need any lectures from Tory Members on that subject.

Will the Attorney-General give an assurance that there will be no cover-up of what occurred in the Maxwell companies? Pensioners of those companies want justice and they are determined that there will be justice and that their pension rights will be restored.

The Attorney-General: I assure the hon. Gentleman that the allegations in the Maxwell case and the general matters arising out of it are being carefully and professionally investigated by a special team with particular funding. It would be wrong for me to go beyond that.

Mr. Harris: I heartily endorse everything said by the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick). Those of us with constituents who were swindled out of their pension rights in that appalling case know of the anguish that they have suffered. Does my right hon. and learned Friend recall that the Queen's counsel who represented one of the Maxwell brothers before the Social Security Select Committee of which I was a member said that his client should not have to answer questions because he was on the threshold of being charged? I remind my right hon. and learned Friend that that was on 13 January.

The Attorney-General: The seriousness of the issues are well understood by all right hon. and hon. Members, and that is why it is particularly important that they should be expertly, professionally and carefully investigated. I assure my hon. Friend and the House that that is exactly what is happening.

Mr. John Morris: I congratulate the Attorney-General and the Solicitor-General on their appointment. It is within the recollection of right hon. and hon. Members that counsel told the Social Security Select Committee that charges would be brought in the near future. What is the current view of the Serious Fraud Office? Was that Queen's counsel right, or was he not?

The Attorney-General: The right hon. and learned Gentleman will recall that the QC in question was the counsel for the defence, with no authority to speak one way or the other for the prosecution. I repeat that the matter is being carefully, expeditiously and skilfully investigated. It would be wrong for me to say more at this stage.

Prosecution Appeals

29. **Mr. Brazier:** To ask the Attorney-General what representations have been made by the Crown prosecution service, to the Royal Commission on criminal justice, on prosecution appeals against perverse acquittals.

The Solicitor-General (Sir Derek Spencer): The Crown prosecution service believes that genuinely perverse acquittals are rare. The full text of the service's evidence is in the Library.

Mr. Brazier: I put it to my hon. and learned Friend that no single factor is more inclined to persuade normally law-abiding citizens to take the law into their own hands than the acquittal of someone in suspicious circumstances. The lesson of not only the riots in California but a growing number of instances in this country, including some in my constituency, is that we ought to reconsider instituting a prosecution procedure for reopening cases in suspicious mistrials that result in acquittal.

The Solicitor-General: I am indebted to my hon. Friend for his submission to the Royal Commission on criminal justice. When it reports, no doubt it will make recommendations about that aspect that the House will want to consider.

Mr. Vaz: Does the Solicitor-General agree that one problem attaching to the Crown prosecution service in that regard is that it does not have enough staff? When will additional resources be allocated to the CPS, to enable it to undertake its work effectively?

The Solicitor-General: Those of us who have spent our lifetimes in the courts know full well that the service does a first-rate job.

Mr. Lawrence: I congratulate my hon. and learned Friend on his appointment. Does he agree that the jury system, with all its faults, is still the best yet devised for the protection of the liberties of the individual accused? Does he agree also that an opinion on the perversity of verdicts is normally that of the losing party and that any attempt to reverse a jury's acquittal decision would represent substantial interference in the principle of the jury system and be thoroughly unwise?

The Solicitor-General: Jury verdicts that individuals regard as oppressive are verdicts that other parties find entirely to their approval.

Sunday Trading

30. **Mr. Jon Owen Jones:** To ask the Attorney-General if he will make a statement on the enforcement of Sunday trading legislation; and if he will make a statement on progress towards resolving issues in regard to the case before the European Court.

The Attorney-General: Two important questions are currently before the courts in relation to Sunday trading —first, the question relating to cross-undertakings in damages, on which the judgment of the House of Lords is expected shortly; and, secondly, the issue as to the compatibility of the Shops Act 1950 and Community law, which is to be heard by the European Court of Justice on 2 June this year. Meanwhile, local authorities can still issue summonses or, indeed, seek injunctions, and I—like my predecessor—keep the question whether the public interest requires me to take action to enforce the law under review.

Mr. Owen Jones: In view of the Prime Minister's stated aim to make the laws on Sunday trading workable, will the Government now give due support to local authorities, such as mine in Cardiff, which are trying to enforce the law? It is not a simple matter of taking out an injunction, as the Attorney-General suggested. Will the Government consider the substance of the Bill relating to the issue that has been presented by my hon. Friend the Member for Ogmore (Mr. Powell), and also consider including it in their programme?

The Attorney-General: The hon. Gentleman will realise that the substantive law, and the reform of that law, are matters for my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary. It is nevertheless worth reminding the House and local authorities—in case they do not remember—that there is absolutely nothing to stop them from continuing to issue summonses when they think that the law is being broken. The cases to which I have referred will come before the courts comparatively soon; once they have been decided, if the law is upheld, the summonses can be carried through to whatever result the court considers appropriate.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Commonwealth of Independent States

34. **Mr. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next intends to meet representatives of the United Nations to discuss aid to the Commonwealth of Independent States.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd): The next opportunity to discuss this issue in an international forum will be at the Lisbon conference on assistance to the former Soviet Union on 23 and 24 May. My right hon. and noble Friend Baroness Chalker will represent the United Kingdom.

Mr. Bennett: May I commiserate with the Minister, who has had to come to the House as a messenger? Can he tell us when we shall see a proper Minister for Overseas Development at the Dispatch Box?

What conditions for the floating of the rouble will be suggested at the conference? We keep reading in the press that it is to be floated, yet no one seems to have explained specifically how that will be implemented so that there is no run on the rouble.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The hon. Gentleman need not express sympathy that is not wanted. There are ample precedents for senior Ministers to serve from the House of Lords. If the hon. Gentleman would like a reminder, let him consider the examples of Lords Longford, Shackleton, Caradon, Chalfont, Crowther Hunt, Goronwy-Roberts and Donaldson. It may be suggested that that was a long time ago; that is because it is so many years since we had a Labour Government.

Let me deal with the hon. Gentleman's specific question. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. The House wants to hear the Minister's response to the question.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer took the lead on this issue in securing an early result and in gaining agreement to the principle of a stabilisation fund for the rouble. Macroeconomics are, of course, a matter to be take up by the appropriate international institution—in this case, the International Monetary Fund.

Mr. Lester: Does my hon. Friend agree that our right hon. and noble Friend Baroness Chalker has served this country, and overseas development, very well indeed? We are very relieved that she is still able to carry out that function without being subjected to the pressures of this place: that can only benefit overseas development.

The major problem in the former Soviet Union is the question of the development of the private sector. We have been running a know-how fund for a considerable time now. How are we getting on with developing the private sector, particularly in the Russian economy?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I thank my hon. Friend for his question. As the Prime Minister said, the job of Minister for Overseas Development is a very important job that needs an experienced and first-rate Minister. The reappointment of my right hon. and noble Friend after the last election was welcomed by the aid community in the United Kingdom. As for my hon. Friend's specific point, there are already encouraging signs that private initiative in the Soviet Union is responding to new opportunities. Tens of thousands of new private farms and allotments have already emerged this year. It is vital that Russia should succeed in order that the republic as a whole succeeds.

Mr. Madden: Does the Minister understand that it is one thing to have the Minister for Overseas Development in the other place but that it is quite another for any reduction to be made in the time available for questions on overseas aid? The House will not tolerate that, bearing in mind the enormous problems that now confront our globe. If anything, we demand an increase in time so that questions on all these matters can be put in this House, where they properly belong.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Within a week of the Queen's Speech I am before this House to answer Overseas Development questions in the usual way. I cannot see any point in the hon. Gentleman's question.

Mr. Tredinnick: My hon. Friend will be aware that Bulgaria is adjacent to the Commonwealth of Independent States. Is he further aware that there is an outstanding invitation to the Foreign Secretary to visit that country? Will he convey——

Madam Speaker: Order. As this is a general question, the hon. Gentleman should restrict himself to general, not specific, questions.

Mr. Tredinnick: I understand that, Madam Speaker. Is my hon. Friend aware that the United Nations element has been nothing like as successful as our own know-how fund, with the creation of seven libraries in Bulgaria?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: As you pointed out, Madam Speaker, this question does not relate to specific countries. However, I can confirm that the how-fund has been an immense success and that this year it has channelled three times as much aid money to the countries for which it finds support as it did in 1990.

Mr. Bennett: On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Order. I take points of order later, as my predecessor did.

Mr. Bennett: With the greatest respect, Madam Speaker—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. I must hear the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Bennett: In view of the unsatisfactory nature of the answer, I beg to give notice that I shall seek to raise this matter on the Adjournment at the earliest opportunity.

Madam Speaker: That was perfectly in order. If I am allowed to hear, we can make progress.

Mozambique

35. **Dr. Howells:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what funds and resources have been allocated to aid famine and drought relief in Mozambique.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: So far this year we have provided 15,000 tonnes of food aid for Mozambique and Mozambican refugees and a substantial part of the £5 million of additional food aid announced by my right hon. and noble Friend the Minister for Overseas Development on 29 April will also go to Mozambique.

Dr. Howells: Three million people in Mozambique are exposed to famine because of this dreadful drought, and perhaps 7 million people in the countries that border Mozambique. The famine agencies say that they cannot get supplies through to rebel-held areas and that if there is not a ceasefire in this terrible civil war, millions of people will die. Does the Minister agree that we should have a direct answer from the Minister for Overseas Development and that if we do not have a direct answer from her soon, as opposed to messages from the other place, we shall have no confidence in what the Government are doing to relieve that famine?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I hope that from now on every Opposition question will not be about my right hon. and noble Friend's position in the other place, because there are serious aid matters to discuss. Mozambique is one of the countries worst affected by drought. We have been responsible for providing substantial aid to Mozambique —about £9 million worth of it as a result of the current emergency. My right hon. and noble Friend's participation in this important area of concern was shown last week in Brussels when she pushed hard for enhanced European Community provision for Mozambique, about which we expect an announcement shortly.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: What progress has been made in repairing the power lines to the major Kabora Bassa dam, which was destroyed by the rebels? If those power lines were repaired, Mozambique could export power to many of the southern African states, thus earning much revenue and helping it to build its own economy and those of other southern African states.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I am afraid that I am unable to answer my hon. Friend's point. In addition to the emergency aid, the balance of payments aid the bilateral aid that we give each year, we are continuing our substantial capital aid programme and our substantial technical co-operation programme. I shall write to my hon. Friend about the detailed points that she made.

Mrs. Clwyd: Would the Minister care to tell us why the United Kingdom is apparently blocking an EC proposal that each EC country should substantially increase overseas aid to the target of 0·7 per cent. of the gross national product by the year 2000, or will he tell me that he cannot answer that question either and that he must ask his right hon. and noble Friend in another place? I hope that he will give a proper answer to that question.

Madam Speaker: Order. I remind the hon. Lady that the question relates to Mozambique.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) owes my right hon. noble Friend and the House an apology. She should be ashamed of herself. She is entitled to feel strongly about aid issues, but she has clothed her feelings in personalised insults against my right hon. and noble Friend, and for that she has——

Mrs. Clwyd *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: —the disrespect of this side of the House.

Welsh Questions

3.30 pm

Mr. Ray Powell (Ogmore): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. As this is the first opportunity that I have had, may I congratulate you on your appointment?

My point of order is on a subject that is important to Wales. We had Welsh questions today. Of the 26 that were tabled, we dealt with 11. Will you use your influence to allow more time for Welsh questions so that Wales's 32 Opposition Members may have more opportunity to ask their questions, to have them answered and to ask supplementaries? Although my question was numbered 13, it was not called. I know that this is a British Parliament, but other Members are more involved in Welsh questions than they were some years ago.

Madam Speaker: That is a matter very much for the usual channels, but the one way to speed up all questions is for pertinent speedy questions to be asked and for speedy answers to be given. We should then get rapidly through the Order Paper.

Orders of the Day

Debate on the Address

[FOURTH DAY]

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question [6 May],

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, as follows:

Most Gracious Sovereign,

We, Your Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled, beg leave to offer our humble thanks to Your Majesty for the Gracious Speech which Your Majesty has addressed to both Houses of Parliament.—*[Mr. Kenneth Baker.]*

Question again proposed.

Privatisation

Madam Speaker: Before the debate begins, I should inform the House that many hon. Members wish to speak. Therefore, I shall impose a 10-minute limit between 7 pm and 9 pm. I hope that hon. Members who speak before 7 pm will place a voluntary restriction on their speeches.

3.33 pm

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (Mr. William Waldegrave): Like the hon. Member for Ogmore (Mr. Powell), this is my first opportunity to congratulate you, Madam Speaker, on your historic victory. I do so most warmly. Legend says that it was a member of my family who was the first to be dragged to your Chair. He had some excuse since the black death prevailed at the time. It would have taken the combined forces of a great many hon. Members to keep you, Madam Speaker, away from the Chair, which you will decorate for many more years than my ancestor did.

I welcome the theme that has been agreed with the Opposition for today's debate on the Loyal Address. Privatisation, nationalisation and denationalisation go to the heart of the differences between us and the Opposition about how government should be conducted.

I shall seek to persuade the House of three propositions. The first is that the theory of politics and government which had nationalisation at its heart is dead in Britain and around the world. It was a theory with high ideals, but it failed. Secondly, I shall attempt to show that the remaining privatisation measures that the Government will introduce fit into a much wider vision of the relationship between the citizen and the state which provides the link between a wide range of the policies outlined in the Gracious Speech and which will dominate the work of this Session and the Sessions in years to come.

Thirdly, I shall argue that the death of the old, socialist approach to government—here and abroad—and its replacement by the new ideas adopted in this country by the Conservatives represents a political sea change, the significance of which is not yet fully understood by the Opposition parties or by those who write about politics from the old perspective.

I shall deal first with the rise and fall of the idea of nationalisation. It mirrors and parallels the rise and fall in the previous century of socialism itself. Its purpose was clear: its proponents were idealistic, but their policy failed

and had very damaging consequences for industry and for citizens and Government alike. A century ago, the belief was that if democratic Governments took control of industry and commerce—either all of it or what the Opposition used to call "its commanding heights"—we should all benefit from sharing the control——

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North) *rose*——

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover) *rose*——

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West) *rose*——

Mr. Waldegrave: It is nice to see so many hon. Members wishing to join in.. I cannot resist the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks).

Mr. Banks: Will the right hon. Gentleman explain how taking over bankrupt railways and bankrupt mines was a failure of socialism? In fact, it was the failure of capitalism that required Labour Governments to take them over.

Mr. Waldegrave: Yes, I shall explain exactly that. I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for listening with such attention. As the hon. Gentleman says, the belief was that we should all benefit if industries that were, in many cases, declining or in bad shape were taken over and subject to democratic control by this House. It was believed that all the workers would gain from better pay and conditions, and the state would use its power of taxation and its power of privileged borrowing to invest for the future. They were the ideals. They were honourable ideals, and no one should doubt that, but they were objectives that have been shown by events to have failed. I argue today that their failure did immeasurable damage not only to the industries involved but to the state itself in the process.

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddleworth): Does not my right hon. Friend think that we should be telling the House and the country that under the previous Labour Government, when companies were nationalised, they were inefficient and the taxpayers had to shovel billions of pounds down the drain year in and year out, but that today the same companies—after privatisation—are contributors to the Treasury and that they are efficient?

Mr. Waldegrave: That is one of the powerful arguments which my hon. Friend is right to deploy, and I shall also deploy it.

Democratic control did not lead to the planning of industries for everyone's benefit. What happened was that the centralisation of huge concentrations of industrial power in Whitehall led all too often to the capture of Whitehall by the very vested interests that the policy was meant to control. Departments became prisoners of the huge industrial interests that used Government power to try to preserve themselves, too often regardless of the needs of the consumer. Instead of the state investing for the future, revenues earned by the private sector—as my hon. Friend the Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth (Mr. Dickens) said—were used for ever more expensive attemptes to prop up yesterday's industries. Civil servants and politicans—

Mr. Winnick *rose*——

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North) *rose*——

Mr. Waldegrave: Two hon. Members are volunteering and I shall give way to them in a moment.

Civil servants and politicians were cast in roles for which they were unsuited, trying to replace the infinitely complex judgments of the markets and to second-guess industrial managers. I give way to the hon. Member on the right.

Mr. Winnick *rose*——

Mr. Hughes: I am on the right; my hon. Friend is on my left. To follow the right hon. Gentleman's argument to its conclusion, will he give an absolutely specific pledge today that the people who are apparently in such a precarious financial position with Canary wharf will receive no help or benefit of any kind from the state to bail them out?

Mr. Waldegrave: I shall not comment on the specific case. My argument is not that there should not in certain cases be partnership between industry and Government —there should—but that the enterprise of bringing into the corridors of power the most old-fashioned parts of our centralised industrial structure was catastrophic for the industries and for Whitehall.

Mr. Winnick: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hughes: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Waldegrave: No. The judgment of Solomon is too great, and I must refuse both hon. Gentlemen now.

Often the industries inevitably became caught up in macro-economic policy decisions, often to the detriment of sensible investment. I have heard the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) eloquently argue that. It was inevitable that they should, if they were part of the state. They were used as levers to try to steer the economy. The most catastrophic example of that was the great capital spending massacre of 1976-77 forced on the Labour Government by the International Monetary Fund.

Mr. Winnick: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Waldegrave: With respect, I shall proceed.

Far from the workers benefiting, industrial relations were worse than in the private economy, as both Lord Callaghan and my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) have good reason to remember. What is more, the lack of individual shareholders concentrated power rather than dispersed it.

At the end of this whole doomed detour all that resulted was that the state was seen by the citizen as the incompetent owner of huge, often inefficient, out-of-date industries and as the protector of powerful producer interests, rather than as the champion of the citizen.

Mr. Winnick *rose*——

Mr. Waldegrave: The hon. Gentleman has been patient, and I give way.

Mr. Winnick: Is it not the case that before 1979 Conservative Governments accepted that basic industries and utilities should be in public ownership and that there was no dispute over that? Indeed, on occasions, a Conservative Government extended public ownership. Therefore, is it not the case that, although Mrs. Thatcher departed, for reasons we know and understand, in the coup of nearly two years ago, to a large extent her policies remain?

Mr. Waldegrave: The hon. Gentleman does not recognise the extent of the change in political ideas that has taken place, including among many in his party. There were, indeed, some Conservatives who accepted some of the programme of that socialist century. I think it was His Majesty King George V who said, "We are all socialists now". None of us is a socialist now, including many on the Labour Benches.

Sir Michael Marshall (Arundel): Does my right hon. Friend agree that surely it was the extension into international manufacturing industries, such as steel and aerospace, that began to show the peculiar problems that nationalisation brought and the way in which Whitehall could kill our place in world markets?

Mr. Waldegrave: I agree with my hon. Friend. Nationalisation was pleasurable for politicians here and for civil servants.

If I may detain the House briefly with an anecdote, my first job as a junior civil servant was to observe the workings of a committee of civil servants which was settling once and for all what the steel production of the country should be. Was it to be 100 million tonnes, 120 million or 180 million? What an extraordinary thing to be doing. The fact that inevitably those decisions were wrong led to investment that ruined people's lives because they were misled into thinking that this House or Whitehall could preserve jobs that did not exist in the market.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington) *rose*——

Mr. Waldegrave: I must proceed a little, but I will always debate with the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: If it were not for the principle of public ownership, would there be a nuclear industry in this country today?

Mr. Waldegrave: Some believe that that industry above all has suffered and perhaps been given an extra-privileged position by its closeness to state decision taking over the years. The hon. Gentleman has been a brave defender of that industry, and he is right to be because it will be needed again. The nuclear industry has not benefited from that closeness.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: But would it be here?

Mr. Waldegrave: The answer is clearly yes. Other countries, such as the United States, have a nuclear industry in the private sector. I agree with the hon. Gentleman in that I very much doubt that the original research would have been done without Government support. That is a different matter.

Democracy itself was established in full only at the beginning of this century, with the ideal of its being the protector and representative of the ordinary citizen. Democracy was no sooner fully established than it was distorted by a single idea—the disastrous attempt to make the state the production manager over a massive range of goods and services. If a single idea mirrored and paralleled the rise of the Labour party in Britain, it was the idea of a massive bureaucratic, managerial state. If there is a single idea which explains the collapse of the Labour party, it is that.

The central initiative of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister's Government is to return Government to their proper role, and part of that task is to return the remaining nationalised industries to their proper place, which is the marketplace.

Ms. Mildred Gordon (Bow and Poplar) *rose*——

Mr. Waldegrave: I will proceed as I have given way generously.

There is no question about the benefits already achieved for citizens and customers. For example, since privatisation, British Telecom's prices have fallen by 27 per cent. in real terms. British Gas has cut its domestic prices and standing charges by 13 per cent. and 23 per cent., and the regulator is seeking more. British Steel now takes less than five hours to produce a tonne of liquid steel compared with 13 hours in 1979-80. The water industry will invest £28,000 million before the turn of the century, ending the dereliction of many years. It was, along with the health service, the worst victim of all of Labour's catastrophic cuts of 1976-77.

Partly as a result of our policies, there has been a huge increase—to about 10 million people—in the number of shareholders, including hundreds of thousands of employees in former nationalised industries. That process has done far more, in reality, to spread and disperse power among our citizens. It has reversed the old process of the concentration of power, which was inherent in the old nationalised industry structure.

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): I am grateful to the Minister for graciously giving way. Does he agree that those shareholders who are workers and ex-workers in British Rail Engineering Ltd., BREL, should have the right to buy more shares in the company, or should they be forced, as they will be, to divest themselves of their existing shares?

Mr. Waldegrave: I do not know about that specific case. I shall ask the Minister most directly concerned what the answer is. However, that is exactly the kind of interventionist decision which should not be taken even by the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) or even with the wisdom of the hon. Lady. It is that delight in detailed intervention from which denationalisation protects those very industries. There is no doubt whatever that separating industry from the managerial attentions of politicians is good for both.

The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East is a real socialist—not what one might call a red-rose socialist—and he does not hide his light under a bushel. With respect to him, he is a perfect example of what industry does not need. Let his famous letter to the chairman of British Rail speak for itself. On each of its six extraordinary unproof-read pages there is a list of detailed instructions written in the language of an 18th century squire of a rather reactionary type addressing his workers. The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East neglected one thing only—to get himself elected to the manor house before sending his instructions to the tenantry. That letter, with its list of detailed, interventionist ideas, seems to be the best and most eloquent argument that could be made for denationalisation.

Mr. John Prescott (Kingston upon Hull, East): If the Secretary of State reads the instructions given to British Rail every three years under the corporate plan, he will find that exactly the same language is used by Tory Secretaries of State to the chairman of British Rail.

Mr. Waldegrave: I have the letter in front of me, and it would be entertaining to read it all to the House because on every page the words "I will instruct" and "I will require" appear a dozen times. That is exactly the role which the hon. Gentleman or future Secretaries of State should not hold—[HON. MEMBERS: "Oh."] That is why we shall denationalise those great industries.

No one now doubts the benefits to industry of being free of that brand of amateur management, but the benefits to Whitehall and the House are real. All that resulted from such cackhanded amateur management was that the state earned the enmity of ordinary people, who learned the hard way that the man from Whitehall does not know best. Some examples this afternoon show that even this Parliament must have often appeared to the people to be more concerned with protecting the status quo of nationalised industries than with the goods and services provided to consumers.

Ms. Diane Abbott (Hackney North and Stoke Newington): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Waldegrave: No; I have given way enough.

That clearer role for Government and industry will be demonstrated in the further steps that we shall take on privatisation in this Session, as described in the Gracious Speech, and in future Sessions. Coal will be returned to the private sector. Proper and powerful regulation to protect the environment and the safety of workers does not now require state ownership of those industries. Regulatory frameworks already exist and the Government are fully committed to their effectiveness and independence. The privatisation of other state-owned industries, such as local authority bus companies, will follow.

Mr. Robert Adley (Christchurch): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Waldegrave: I shall give way to my hon. Friend if he wishes to speak about British Rail, as any hon. Member should. We intend to bring competition and private capital into the network by franchising. A new rail regulator will ensure that all companies have fair access to the track and that agreed standards are met.

Mr. Adley: As ever, we are enjoying my right hon. Friend's philosophical appraisal of the political situation. I hope that he is saying that the Conservative party is now pragmatic, whereas we fear that many Opposition Members are dogmatic. Does my right hon. Friend agree that there must be a role for the state somewhere? We do not want Wessex fighting Mercia in privatised armies. We believe that it is right, for example, that we should have a national curriculum. Does he agree that the job of the Government should be to find the right place to put the line, and not automatically assume that the state has no role to play in either the major industries or the services which the nation expects to be provided for it?

Mr. Waldegrave: The state has an absolutely crucial role to play—that of regulator, legislator and creator of the framework. I beg my hon. Friend to believe, on the evidence of the decade, that the state as industrial manager is not at its best for the state or for industry. Virtually no one now thinks, in Britain or abroad, except in the British Labour party, that Government or citizen is well served by a Government trying to be the provider of goods and services. Nationalisation is dead.

My second proposition is that a new and clear theory of government is now coming forward to replace nationalisation. Government should, where necessary, be the regulator of industry and the representative of the citizen.

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): Is what is included in the Queen's Speech properly described as the privatisation of the railway system?

Mr. Waldegrave: What is described in the Queen's Speech is the same as what is described clearly in our election manifesto—access to the network by franchising to private capital. The hon. Gentleman may not have found time during the election campaign to read our manifesto. If what we aim to do leads to privatisation, so much the better. But the hon. Gentleman should wait for the Bill.

Where necessary, Government should be the regulator of industry and the representative of the citizen. Where possible, they should set a framework for competition to deliver real and effective power to the consumer. Where there is monopoly—publicly or privately owned—regulation on behalf of the consumer must be tough. The arm's-length relationship with privatised industries, even —or perhaps especially—when they are monopolies, makes that far easier. In the new world, citizen or consumer becomes king again, as he does in Whitehall, where the old insider track for the producer giants is ended.

Where the function is a service, properly provided in a modern state by a Government—for example, health or welfare—the Government should organise themselves to represent, above all, the interests of the user. In those spheres, Government will be directly answerable for the standards of services provided, and for their cost. We, as Ministers, should be remorseless in our pressure on the organisations that we set up to deliver services to the standards that the citizen as user wants, and with the maximum cost efficiency that the citizen as taxpayer demands. By far the best way of doing so is to make clear and explicit contracts on behalf of the user with those whom we pay to provide the services. It is that customer-contractor, provider-purchaser, split that lies at the heart of the new doctrine of how Government, central and local, should provide services.

Into the agreements that Government make on behalf of the citizen should go, quite explicitly, the standards agreed on his behalf, with clear procedures for measuring and publicising whether they have been met. The user must be told openly what the standards are, and given usable information on performance so that he can judge whether they have been met. The provider must be told of the consequences if he fails, including the possible loss of his contract as provider.

Ms. Abbott: If the Minister argues that privatisation is so good and nationalisation is so bad, why is it that, whenever the public is polled on the possibility of the privatisation of British Rail, the public is overwhelmingly against it?

Mr. Waldegrave: If what the hon. Lady says is true, it may be because the public have been led to believe by the Labour party that privatisation would lead to inferior services. To take the examples that I have given, once those policies are carried through, they become popular, not only with employees but with the country at large.

Ms. Abbott *rose*——

Mr. Robert Hughes *rose*——

Mr. Waldegrave: The hon. Lady and the hon. Gentleman have just had the opportunity to put that argument to the country, and it did not meet with much faith.

Mr. Hughes: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Waldegrave: No—we have had enough interventions from Labour Members.

The provider must be told of the consequences if he fails, including the possible loss of his contract as provider. If the service is not good enough, other providers must be found. Providers owned by the state should have no special privileges if service is not adequate.

That is the set of policies that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has called his citizens charter, each part of which fits with the rest. Standards are being set for the public service; regulators are delivering cuts in prices on behalf of consumers; on behalf of patients, health authorities and general practitioners are demanding better service in hospitals; independent inspectors of, for example, schools are publicly reporting on the standards; the purchaser-provider split is building a constant dialogue on quality control into public services. In every aspect, the Government are returning to their proper, historic role as champion of the individual against the special interest, not acting as the representative of the special interest.

These themes are interconnected. There should be an open and clear setting of standards, which the citizen as customer, client or consumer can expect, with clear publication of the results of the monitoring. That must be done by the organisations themselves. For example, British Rail is today starting its track record initiative, and is publishing information on punctuality and reliability at about 100 Network SouthEast stations.

There should be far more openness in general, from Whitehall down to the local school. In the next few days, we shall be publishing for the first time the membership of Cabinet Committees, and the document on guidance to Ministers. In our, unwritten, constitution, such procedural rules are important—as they are to the House.

Sir Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): Will my right hon. Friend the Minister clarify what is being proposed? He will know that I represent commuters on the Fenchurch Street line, which has been woefully neglected by British Rail for many years. The people in Southend want to know whether the proposal is for a private firm to run the railway line, with British Rail still being responsible for investment, or for the private firm to have some involvement in the investment programme?

Mr. Waldegrave: The details of bids must wait until the Bill is passed, but the principle of the matter is set out clearly in our party's manifesto, with which my hon. Friend will be as familiar as I am. It is clear that private companies—a number of them are queuing up—will be given access to bid for the provision of services, and if they bid to provide services to Southend there will doubtless be an increase in competition which will bring about an improvement in service for my hon. Friend's constituents.

The regulator, British Rail, will be accountalbe for the performance of the franchiser—not a difficult concept for even Opposition Members to understand. The underlying principle of clear standards and open accountability, with the provider being removable if he does not provide them, lies at the heart of the dispersal of power which goes with the policy. One of the best writers on British Government once wrote of Whitehall as being like a village where little was open or explicit. That has been true of too much of the way in which we have done things in Britain, and change is overdue. Government is too big a part of national life to be conducted like that, and my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister means to change things.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Waldegrave: The hon. Gentleman must let me continue; I have already given way to him once.

These are the ideas which my right hon. Friend said would lie at the heart of decision taking in the Government, and the groundwork has been well laid by Francis Maude, to whom I pay a warm tribute. I hope that he will soon be returned to the House.

My third and final point has been confirmed in the House today. These policies offer an immensely powerful and logically consistent programme. They bring choice, ownership, accountability, openness, efficiency and effectiveness together as the weapons that the Government will deploy to see that the power of the citizen becomes a reality. They deal with the real issues of the 1990s and beyond. I may be wrong—although nothing said by Opposition Members has given me cause to think that I am—but I do not believe that the Labour party has yet begun to grapple with the fact that the doctrine of the state at the heart of its political programme has collapsed, leaving a vacuum. The very fact that most Opposition Members sit here as unashamed representatives not only of their constituents but of those most antique of producer lobbies, British trade unions, confirms that more eloquently than any words could. I refer in particular to some of the public sector unions whose party-political advertisements appeared at the time of the election—notably those of NALGO and the Inland Revenue Staff Federation. Many of their members, I suspect, are fed up with being used as political cannon fodder in this way.

It is not just a matter of whether the block vote is delivered to Mr. Brian Smith or Mr. John Gould. Every sponsored Opposition Member represents the old power structure and the politics of the past. From my party's point of view, long may that last—long may the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East flourish like the green bay tree, as he shows every sign of doing. For while he and his colleagues continue to fight and lose the battles of the 1890s, we shall be fighting and winning the battles of the 1990s.

4.2 pm

Mr. John Prescott (Kingston upon Hull, East): May I express my congratulations to you, Madam Speaker, and my warm feeling towards your appointment to your new job? We have worked together on a number of delegations and it gave me a moment of great pride and genuine pleasure when I learnt that you had been elected Speaker by the House.

We have just heard a speech that was supposed to be, in the words of the Secretary of State, powerful and logical, but I am bound to say that that was not evident

from the speech itself. If it represented the cutting edge of Majorism, that does not say much for its cutting power——

Mr. Waldegrave: It has won the argument so far.

Mr. Prescott: Nevertheless, here in this House the arguments must still be deployed. Today the right hon. Gentleman attempted to put his arguments for why he believes that privatisation is an important part of the Queen's Speech.

The Queen's Speech, however, does not propose the full-blooded privatisation of British Rail, since many involved in the practicalities have seen that British Rail cannot be fully privatised without major consequences for the consumers and passengers whom the right hon. Gentleman says he wants to defend.

The right hon. Gentleman's speech today has received considerable publicity in the newspapers—I believe that he has been described by the Prime Minister as the Minister for little people. I hope that he goes from strength to strength, but I suspect that he will not be a very powerful Minister for the little people. He has been described as the new superstar in the Government, but from the descriptions in the newspapers I could not make up my mind whether he was the new superstar or the Minister for paper clips. In his speech he seemed to fall somewhere between the two.

I welcome this opportunity to debate privatisation. There are major philosophical differences between Labour and the Conservatives and this is the forum in which to re-emphasise and debate them. The Minister has at least attempted to do that. In a debate on privatisation, especially of coal, one would have expected the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry or the Secretary of State for Transport to deploy the arguments.

The Minister might not have got himself into such difficulties if he had known the detail surrounding his job. Some of the questions put to him about transport are generally known to most hon. Members and would have been familiar to the new Secretary of State for Transport —the eighth or ninth in the past 13 years. I have made my protest clear. The Secretary of State for Transport should be here because the debate is largely about the privatisation of transport and especially of British Rail and British Coal.

The Minister put his case too strongly when he said that the nationalisation of public utilities and public industries should be avoided by all Governments. The nationalisation that came immediately to mind, and properly so, was the Tory Government's intervention to save Rolls-Royce. There was not a dissenting voice in the House when that happened and there was certainly no vote against it because people knew that only the Government could save that company. It was subsequently privatised, but I do not think that anyone doubted that the state had to intervene to save Rolls-Royce—an important high-technology company. It was right to take it into public ownership but wrong to pass it back to the private sector. However, that is a matter of political judgment.

The Minister set out what he thought were the judgments to be applied. They were whether the theory of nationalisation had failed and whether it was important to have a link with the citizen. We accept that there is a need for such a link, but public ownership does not deny the opportunity to defend the citizen's rights or to ensure that public utilities provide good quality gas, electricity and water. Those issues have been at the heart of the privatisation debate. I am not convinced, nor are many consumers who now, as it were, languish under the privatised sector public utilities, that those objectives have been met in as good a way as they were in the public sector. There are facts to justify that view.

I shall confine myself to the issue in the Gracious Speech, which is largely about privatisation. The Minister's arguments for the privatisation of coal and transport are perhaps a little different from those that he would have advanced for gas and electricity. Coal and transport are not easy to privatise for a number of substantial reasons. The industries have common factors that must be taken into account. They are both strategic and, in the national interest, there must be proper utilisation of our coal resources, which are considerable, in a national energy policy.

In order to deal with problems of congestion and the environment there must be an effective rail system. That has been discovered in Europe. People must be encouraged to use their cars less and public transport more, because we cannot build our way out of a 140 per cent. growth in the use of the motor car in the next 25 years. Sufficient roads cannot be built to meet such an increase in demand. Public sector industries are important and buses, trains and aeroplanes have a major part to play in reducing the massive costs of congestion and environmental damage. That is the challenge for those industries and the Government must have a view about how those industries will develop. Whether they are publicly or privately owned can be debated, but Government must have a role.

The Secretary of State for Trade and Industry is as much interested in whether the coal industry can get a coal contract with the national power generating companies, particularly if he wants to sell the industry off. Without a proper contract for coal, the industry is not saleable, as must be evident to everyone. That means that the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry may have to impose, or at least influence, a contract for coal at a price higher than the dump price at which coal is sold on the international market at present. The Government have to have a judgment and a position. Whether publicly or privately owned, the Government must have a role in the running of the industry.

Neither of these industries can be left to market forces, which cannot alone solve the problem. There must be assistance, through a financial or regulatory framework in which the Government are involved. Both industries would be in a worse position if the market were left to create the solutions. Both are efficient in comparison with their European counterparts. It may be argued that the coal produced in British coalfields costs more than gas in fuel equivalents, but it is still the cheapest deep-mined coal in Europe, and nobody argues about that.

Whatever the arguments about the rail industry, productively it is far better than in most of the European systems and it costs a lot less to finance, although I would argue that it needs more money. Given the state resources to these industries, both are more efficient than their European counterparts. Furthermore, both of them have suffered, under both Labour and Tory Governments, from the stupid Treasury rules that we apply to public-sector industries. I protested when Labour Governments used them, and I continue to protest today, under a Tory Government. Anybody looking at the role of Treasury

[Mr. Prescott]

funding and Treasury rules for our public-sector industries knows only too well that they disadvantage the public sector.

One of the first things that happens when public utilities are privatised is that they are allowed access to private capital, which means that they can borrow money often at a cheaper rate, and to equity financing—methods that are denied to industries in the public sector which have to use public loans, which have high interest rates. That is one of the reasons why so much capital debt is written off for these public industries. Both Governments have done that. We have been unfair in preventing public-sector industries from borrowing privately, using leasing arrangements. That has added to the financial difficulties of these industries.

There is thus a strong argument for changing the Treasury rules, just as there is for doing something about pricing policies. I know of no Government who have not been tempted—here we may have the point that the Minister wished to make—perhaps because of a prices and incomes policy, to influence the prices of those industries. Even this Government continue to influence prices because that has political and economic consequences.

Even if these industries were privatised, they would still require Government support. Privatisation requires the writing off of billions of pounds in accumulated debt because of the process of Treasury financing, and the paying of millions of pounds to agencies and banks to facilitate such a process. The real value of the assets is not reflected in the selling price because the price is well below the asset values of companies when they are sold on the market.

Therefore, I would judge the process of privatisation against what we have in the public sector and by whether the consumer is better off as a result. That is the challenge posed to us by the Minister, and I shall answer it.

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): The hon. Gentleman spoke about philosophical differences. The hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) said that he would like to exclude the dividend to private shareholders. Would the hon. Gentleman be happy to serve under a leader committed to such a policy?

Mr. Prescott: I am sorry but I must ask the hon. Gentleman to repeat his question. I was distracted.

Mr. Thurnham: The hon. Member for Dagenham said that he would like to exclude the dividends that are paid to private shareholders. Would the hon. Gentleman be happy to serve under a leader of the Labour party who was committed to such a daft policy?

Mr. Prescott: I do not recognise the question that the hon. Gentleman poses. He may well have the opportunity tomorrow to put his question to my hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) when we continue to debate the Gracious Speech.

The Government do not justify privatisation on the basis of intervening on behalf of the little citizen. Instead, they want to get their grubby hands on moneys that become available as a result of selling assets. That is the only reason for intervention and privatisation. The Government are interested not least in reducing the public sector borrowing requirement in pursuing their monetary policy. When the borrowing requirements of privatised industries come within the private sector, the same reasons are deployed for the need to invest, but they do not come within the PSBR. Irrespective of whether the investment, public or private, is beneficial to the economy, including the consequential effects of it, the Treasury rules prevent such investment taking place if the industry is in the public sector.

A considerable amount of evidence—it is produced during Select Committee hearings and elsewhere—is available to the Secretary of State to enable him to compare the public utilities such as gas, electricity, telephones, water, the railways and the mines with their counterparts in the rest of Europe. The privatisation of gas, electricity and British Telecom followed the public ownership of those utilities. Tory and Labour Governments brought them into the public sector because their capital requirements were vast. These utilities were built up by Labour and Tory Governments for the good reason that their massive capital requirements meant that the state had to be involved. Secondly, industries that would be strategic to any economy required security and stability. It was through state involvement that we developed these major industries, making a major contribution to our economy.

By adopting that approach, we secured a better investment programme for the industries than their counterparts in the rest of Europe. There was better investment and research and development in this country. There was greater innovation and cheaper prices here than elsewhere in Europe. The scale of our research and development was far ahead of any European counterpart.

Let us consider energy production, especially in terms of the gas and electricity industries in the private sector, in America. The American industries are worried that they will not be able to secure sufficient resources to enable them to invest on the scale that is required, to generate the gas and electricity that is required and meet their capital requirements. That is part of the argument of the public utilities. They want stability. In fact, they do not have competition. There was, however, competition between the electricity grids in New York and those in other American states. There was more concern about the provision of electricity in the various states than about preventing the black-out that occurred in New York. That led to an argument that was based on competition and whether a competitive advantage could be achieved, not on whether there was a national obligation to maintain stability in the provision of electricity. That was what competition produced in America. In this country, we produced stability in a system of which we should have been proud instead of proceeding to break it up.

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that when the water industry, for example, submitted the sort of investment that it required, it found that it took bottom place in the list of public sector requirements? Since the industry has been privatised, its investment has rocketed.

Mr. Prescott: I was trying to make that point. Basically, the Treasury would not allow the water industry to borrow on the private market. That was the position of all the public utilities. That does not happen in America or in the rest of Europe, because industries there are allowed to raise money in different ways. There is no reason why the

public sector here could not have done what the private sector is doing. It was not prevented from doing so by legislation that was enacted by the House. It was stopped by Treasury rules as defined by the Treasury and civil servants, who decided that the public sector industries would not raise moneys in the private market. We can have a big argument about this, and I tried to initiate one on 11 July during a debate on British Rail and its financing requirements. I shall not advance again the arguments that I deployed on that occasion. I merely say that the private sector can borrow for investment while we prevent the public sector from doing so. There is no justification for that.

The public sector has a good record. If anyone doubts that, I ask him to compare the publicly-owned telephone system in Britain, which is in my constituency, which is part of Hull, with the privatised British Telecom. The publicly-owned system's prices are cheaper and there is proportionally greater investment and research and development. Some older people are provided with a free telephone because it is felt that it is necessary that they should have one. That system, which is run by a local authority, is far superior to the private telephone system, with all its Mercury competition.

I do not accept that the public sector cannot produce a better service. It can do so. It can, of course, have a lousy management and do it lousy. There are good private companies and bad private companies, and there is good and bad in the public sector. Management's function is to control, and ownership is not the issue. There can be good management in public companies and good management in private companies. It is not simply an issue of ownership. The reason for the Government's drive for privatisation is the loot from the sales. More than £60 billion has been raised by selling assets. It is just a quick buck because the Government gave up the right to the yearly profits and income from such industries as gas, electricity and water. Those profits were available and were often taken by the Treasury.

The Government's argument is one of less interference. They say that the consumer will be better off through greater investment in research and development. Their ideological view is that it is better to have a private rather than a public monopoly. Their first objective of loot was achieved. They got their £60 billion plus, but what about the taxpayer? It cost £18 billion simply to write off debt in those industries. The Government undervalued the amounts of money in those industries by £4 billion—that is the amounts that the stock market recorded as their value after the sale of shares on the first day. The taxpayer lost a great deal of money.

The bankers and the other Government agents were given £1·5 billion for the privilege of selling the assets. I notice that £1·3 million was paid by one agent to the Tory party. I suppose that a 10 per cent. kick-back was the arrangement. Of course, some of the Secretaries of State who privatised those industries then joined their boards. They have done very well out of it. Privatisation is to do with kick-backs, greed and sleaze in the Tory party.

Privatisation was also good for the salaries of the chairmen of those industries. The Secretary of State said that he was protecting the little people—the consumers. I shall come to the effect on them in a moment. It was certainly beneficial for bankers, agents and Secretaries of State, none of whom could be described as the little people. The salaries of those little people who are the chairmen of those industries have risen by between 30 and 75 per cent. The salary of the chairman of British Telecom rose from £84,000 to £536,000. He made changes and put thousands of people on the dole. That affected the rate of return on profits—of which, of course, the chairman gets a share.

In what is the consumer most interested? It is prices. The Secretary of State picked out one narrow price example that has occurred only during the past 12 months. The truth is that prices in those industries have increased considerably above the rate of inflation. There has been an 11 per cent. rise in electricity prices, 94 per cent. in water charges, 4 per cent. in telephone charges and 25 per cent. in gas prices. Those are considerable real increases above inflation.

Investment in those industries has begun to fall. In British Telecom it has fallen by 18 per cent. in real terms. Investment in research and development in the gas industry has fallen by 16 per cent. Thousands and thousands of people in those industries have been made redundant. That is the Government's record on prices, investment, research and development and jobs.

One measure of the effect on the little people is the number of complaints, which have increased considerably. In 1990, there were almost 200,000 complaints against the public utilities. Polls show that between 30 and 50 per cent. of people are dissatisfied with the public utilities since privatisation. Those indices do not show satisfaction among the little people whom the Secretary of State says he is here to defend. Privatisation was done in their name, but it has not been beneficial to them.

Sir Thomas Arnold (Hazel Grove): The hon. Gentleman says that ownership is not the only issue, and I accept that. Is he in favour of retaining clause IV of the Labour party's constitution?

Mr. Prescott: I was arguing that there is a good case for public ownership, which is embodied in Labour's clause IV —which I am happy to accept—[HON. MEMBERS: "Oh."] I do not see why that should be so staggering. Do the Government, in declining to privatise British Rail, accept that argument? If they do not believe in clause IV, why does not the Bill privatise British Rail? That just makes a nonsense of their argument. Some industries do better remaining in public ownership than in private ownership.

The Chancellor of the Duchy said that the regulators would be tough with privatised industries. That will be good when it happens, but it has not happened yet. Does that mean that the right hon. Gentleman will not leave matters to market forces? Is he saying that a regulator should intervene instead of Parliament, so that privatised industries do not exploit their monopoly? I do not know where regulators fit into Labour's clause IV, but it is about intervention, controls, and judgment in the community as to the price mechanism and investment levels. That is as at home in America as it is here. Public utilities are in a sense private monopolies. They exploit their position, and they are bound to do so.

Mr. David Sumberg (Bury, South): Has not the hon. Gentleman forgotten one group of little people? I refer to the hundreds of thousands of small shareholders who bought into those public utilities. They want to keep their shares. There are now more shareholders than trade unionists in this country. What does the hon. Gentleman have to say to those shareholders—most of whom voted Conservative at the general election?

Mr. Prescott: Fifty per cent. of the original small shareholders sold their holdings within the first 12 months to make a quick buck. Today, concentrated capital in the City's big financial institutions controls our utilities, and they have little accountability. The hon. Gentleman should be more concerned about the hundreds of thousands of people who cannot afford to pay for heating because energy prices have considerably increased. The number of disconnections has also increased. No one is concerned to help those people. The little people are more concerned about how they can afford energy and heat than about buying shares. When it comes to it, that is the difference between us.

In case the House thinks that I am exaggerating the profits that are being made, and just to show that I am an intellectual, I refer to an article in today's issue of *The Times* business section. If the Chancellor of the Duchy had read it, he would not have said some of the things that he did.

The article reports that a storm threatens over the likely surge in power profits. It states that the 12 electricity distribution companies expect to report a profits rise of more than 40 per cent. in their first full year since privatisation. That is a phenomenal figure—higher than expected. The article adds:

"Manweb's profits before tax should soar to £95 million last year, an increase of 77 per cent. on 1990-91."

It is predicted that the industry's profits will rise another 13 per cent. by June next year. That is the scale of the profits made under privatisation and why shares have been oversubscribed. People know that there is a good killing to be made—but who pays for it but the little people? What will the Chancellor of the Duchy do about them and all those massive profits?

Mr. Waldegrave: Would the hon. Gentleman be happier if the rumour was that the profits of those industries were going down? Is that what he is saying?

Mr. Prescott: No, but a 77 per cent. increase is phenomenal in any terms, and is not justifiable under the circumstances. That supports our argument about public utilities. When they are converted from public to private monopolies, there is little accountability. Those utilities then exist to look after not the little people but their shareholders. That is precisely what is being said by their chairmen. The millions of people who have no shares in those utilities have to pay the price, to produce that level of profit. The right hon. Gentleman should be concerned about a 77 per cent. increase in profits. My information is right up to date.

Then we come to the coal industry. What worries me is this: given that the electricity industry can make so much money, what will it do next? Encouraged by the Government to introduce competition, the industry will now argue for generation by means of gas rather than coal. The implication of that is starkly clear—the electricity industry will not want to order coal.

Such a development will have a major effect on coal privatisation. I believe that the contract is to be negotiated in the autumn. If bodies that are making excessive profits begin to turn to gas generation, that is bound to have a significant impact on energy policy. It will certainly affect the coal industry. Already, pits have closed on a massive scale; the number has now fallen under the Tories from 200 to 50, and the latest report suggests that, if the contract is not secured, there will be 15 or fewer pits left.

The companies concerned have been encouraged to turn to "more attractive" generation—in other words, cheaper generation. That means either generation by means of imported coal or gas generation, and it has major implications for the economy and the use of energy. We are importing a good deal of coal, and we have a considerable trade deficit. That will now increase. Redundancies will be another problem: because 200,000 redundant miners have been presented with no alternative jobs in the mining areas, their redundancy has cost nearly £1 billion in unemployment pay—and, given the high unemployment levels that have existed under the present Government, the amount has already been increasing considerably.

Whole communities will be wiped out. The right hon. Gentleman cannot be indifferent to the development of a proper energy policy; the Government cannot stand aside from matters such as the use of gas, imported coal and our own deep-mined coal. Presumably the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, so that he can fulfil the policy to privatise the mines, will ask the right hon. Gentleman to persuade the generators to buy the extra-cost deeper-mined coal. Will the right hon. Gentleman now direct them towards the more expensive fuel option? I do not think for a moment that the Government will stand aside from the issue. They want the money from the sale—although the industry will problably be sold at a giveaway price—and they must be involved in the coal contract.

It will not stop there, however. Many industries are dependent on coal. My area contains a firm, Fenners, which makes webs and belts. Firms that have been major contributors to the Tory party are suddenly beginning to realise that running down the coal industry affects manufacturing capacity. That is another important aspect of public utilities: they have been a major source of the development of manufacturing capacity in this country, thus affecting orders and investment. Sometimes we have paid more for British manufactured goods than we would pay for imports. That does not worry the private sector, but it is crucial to the development of our economy and manufacturing industry.

A connected issue is transport. The Government say that they will sell off the freight sector. A profitable part of that sector is rail freight, and 80 per cent. of its profits come from moving coal around the country. Once the pits are closed, that profitable part will no longer be profitable. At least it is profitable now, and the money made by rail freight can be invested in the rail system. I do not know why Conservative Members are laughing; the link between industrial investment and transport policies is a serious matter. It is clear that rail freight is dependent on coal.

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Stephen Dorrell): The hon. Gentleman seemed to be arguing that we should keep the current level of coal mining going so that we could keep the trains going on the railways.

Mr. Prescott: The Community has spent millions of pounds in investing in coal port areas. The hon. Gentleman should know that, as he was once my opponent in Kingston upon Hull, East—he was defeated then. I am merely saying that, before they sell off the rail freight industry, the Government should consider the goods that the trains are carrying. Trains carry coal; now the number of mines providing the demand is to be reduced. If things

are allowed to continue as they are now, the privatisation of rail will follow—or, at least, certain parts will be sold off.

It has been called cherry picking and selling off the profitable parts of the rail system. It has been suggested that Virgin might offer a two-tier service. One Minister referred to it as cheap and cheerful. British Rail would still control investment in track and signalling. No private sector body would want to carry out that important and expensive task. All that the private sector wants to do is to lease trains and run them on the track. The private sector would be provided with advantages in that way.

I do not set my face against the involvement of private capital. British Rail has attracted private capital on the freight side for some years. That is irrelevant, however, when one considers the inadequate funding of British Rail. Between £3 billion and £4 billion has been taken out of its coffers and that has caused it real problems. It has had a major effect on manning, investment in safety measures, track investment and quality and reliability of service. So much money has been taken away from British Rail that it is now the poorest funded railway system in Europe. The quality of the system has consequently suffered.

I have argued the case for private capital. Publicly-owned companies in Europe borrow privately. I am prepared to see British Rail have a debt equity base so that it can borrow privately. That is not an ideological problem for us. Any publicly-owned facility can do that. However, one has to look at the Government's record on private capital. They introduced the concept of private capital for the channel tunnel, which has had more than its fair share of problems. The Government also said that private finance must be found for the channel tunnel rail link. They stated that no public money should be involved. Now we do not know when the rail link will be operational. It will probably not be completed until the next century. While the European economy steams ahead, we still do not know where the rail link is going to be. That is scandalous.

As for the Paddington to Heathrow link, British Rail expected to be able to invest 20 per cent., but it cannot find even that amount of money. London, a major capital city, does not have a proper railway infrastructure to connect it to Heathrow. The west coast main line is desperately needed but it is inadequately financed. It needs £1 billion, but the Government have not stated clearly where that money will come from.

As for docklands, the jewel in the Tory party's crown, the Jubilee line is not London Transport's priority. That was shown clearly in the Government's report. However, because Olympia and York offered £400 million towards a £1·7 billion project, the Government rushed in and said that there would be a combination of public and private investment. Last month, however, they failed to meet the first month's £40 million contribution. There is a financial crisis, bordering on bankruptcy. Now we hear that the Government intend to reschedule the debts and to move in and take a few floors of office space for the Departments of Transport, Environment and Trade and Industry. What makes me smile is that all the civil servants who are to be moved to docklands will have to travel by means of the docklands light railway, which is our most over-utilised rail system. The Treasury set the standards for the completion of that railway, with the result that it has become totally ineffective. It keeps on breaking down and now, I believe, has been sold for £1 to a company that has no experience of transport. I understand that the first thing that the company did was to ring up London Transport and say, "How do you operate it?" If that is an example of how Tories talk to City people and use private capital, God help us. Of course there is a role for Government.

The Queen's Speech, which proposes a few private coaches being tacked on to the Edinburgh train, the selling of a few stations and the addition of a Virgin train, is irrelevant to the problems of British Rail. Is the argument that private sector management is better than public sector management? The Secretary of State chastised me for the language in the direction. The same language was used by the previous three Secretaries of State in instructions to British Rail. I make no apology. I instructed British Rail to produce a safety plan showing where the money would come from to improve safety on British Rail. After the terrible tragedies on our railways, I wish that the Secretary of State would issue such an instruction.

The remit to rail management was given by this Government. The Government told British Rail, "You must make InterCity profitable." It has done that. By Treasury definitions, it is the only profitable rail line in Europe. The Government said: "Bring in private capital", which it has done on its freight and wagon fleet. The Government told it to improve productivity, which it has done considerably.

Mr. Bruce Grocott (The Wrekin): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Prescott: I shall in a second.

The Government told BR to reduce the PSO—the subsidy given by Government, which reduced in real terms, at 1990-91 prices, from £1,280 in 1983 to £520 in 1988-89. It achieved that, but then the Government sacked the chairman, poor Mr. Reid mark I, who achieved the objectives that they had set. BR achieved every objective that the Secretary of State set. There was nothing about quality of service or reliability, yet the Government blamed management. The Secretary of State may say that politicians should not be involved, but they gave management those objectives and failed to provide the resources to meet them.

The real issue is resources. In 1980, Peter Parker, the then chairman of British Rail, produced a plan and said, "We need so many resources that it cannot all come from the taxpayer; it must come from the private sector as well." They were refused the right to borrow from the private sector.

The Government have appointed a new chairman, Mr. Reid mark II, who told them that BR needs £1 billion a year. The Government have not said where the money will come from, and the rumours coming from the Treasury of public sector cuts promise little for the major investment that our rail industry needs.

The Minister for Public Transport (Mr. Roger Freeman): I am sure that the House would like to know that Sir Robert Reid, the first chairman of British Rail, was not sacked. British Rail is investing £1·5 billion this year.

Mr. Prescott: I withdraw that; he was not sacked, but he left a disappointed man. He felt that he had been made the scapegoat for an industrial dispute, despite achieving all the objectives within the tight financial framework set by the Government.

[Mr. Prescott]

The Minister mentioned BR's investment this year. What is it likely to be next year? In "Future Rail: The Next Decade" British Rail's chairman—whom the Government appointed and who has business experience with a powerful private company, Shell—says that he needs £1 billion a year for the next 10 years. I could understand the Government arguing against that if they had produced their own financial framework, but they have not done so. Therefore, instead of cleverly jumping up here, will the Minister tell us what British Rail's investment resources will be over the next five years?

Mr. Freeman: I will tell the hon. Gentleman in October.

Mr. Prescott: He has not answered. No wonder the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster opened the debate instead of the Secretary of State for Transport.

The reality is more financial constraints. The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster spoke of the passengers charter making the consumer king. He was concerned about the little man and about making the consumer king. The passengers charter did not set tougher targets for reliability but made it clear that no extra money would be made available. Old trains are less reliable than new trains. Passengers who use the Southend line or Kent routes know that it is no good talking about achieving the passengers charter without decent rolling stock or reliability.

The Government did their old trick, which they use for the unemployment statistics: they fiddled the figures. In 1986, they defined a late train as being five minutes late, and 23 per cent. were more than five minutes late. In 1987 they redefined it as 10 minutes and 13 per cent. were late, which they claimed to be an improvement. They have now defined lateness as one hour, before which passengers cannot claim compensation. They then exempted those passengers who lived in metropolitan transport authority areas—it therefore would not apply to millions of people, and then limited it again to people with season tickets in the Southern region. That is all useless hype, nothing to do with the problem.

Let me make an offer to the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, in the spirit of goodwill in which he presented the debate today. As I said on 11 July 1991, this country would be better served if we took a bit of the ideology out of running our rail system. Is he prepared to do that and to recognise that British Rail is the sole authority and should not be separated? Its needs for investment in signalling and rolling stock can be met by public or private finance. We must change the Treasury rules. Let us agree on a 10-year rolling programme of investment for British Rail—and it needs that certainty. Let us agree that rail has a major part to play if we are to do anything about congestion and our environment. Let us agree on those quality objectives and allocate the finance necessary to achieve them. Let us agree also on fair criteria for investment in road and rail, instead of it being loaded against the rail system.

If the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster accepts and implements those practical measures, he will do more for the little people of this country than all the ideological nonsense he spoke. Let us improve our rail system; it would not be particularly socialist to do so. It is commonly done in Europe, so it is necessary that we have a good transport system that meets the needs of people and industry in this country to enable Britain to take part in the European economy, which we are bound to do. That is the least that we can do and it would be a major step forward. I hope that he will pass on that message to the Secretary of State for Transport, who should have attended this debate instead of him.

4.46 pm

Mr. Michael Alison (Selby): Much the most interesting point made by the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) was his sharp attack on the effect of the Treasury hand on public expenditure under the present Conservative Government and earlier Labour Governments, along with his claim that the quality of management in public and private industries was on a par. But he cannot have it both ways. Public sector and nationalised industries cannot get rid of the cold hand of the Treasury. To imagine that there is an alternative to avoiding Treasury supervision—a Treasury tranche of management—is simply self-deception.

I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman did not focus sharply enough on the proper role of the Treasury, which, after all, is the accountant in the operation. How can a nationalised or publicly owned industry be managed in a way that maximises management at management level at a plant and still allows a hand for the Treasury? The answer is that there will always be a dualistic form of management, and hence blurred objectives and conflicts between the management of a plant and of the operation itself, and the managerial oversight of the Treasury. It simply cannot work both ways: the Treasury cannot be managerially involved, and at the same time leave sound management to the plant or local managers. The hon. Gentleman, in his interestingly philosophical speech, thought that there was a middle way—a scheme by which the Treasury remained, but with its influence much reduced by allowing a public corporation to have access to the equity market.

The hon. Gentleman then launched a violent attack as a result of one of his occasional readings of *The Times* on the notion of massive profits. If he dislikes profits and thinks that they are much too high in a particular industry but at the same time believes that the only alternative to Treasury oversight is to have an equity dimension in the publicly owned industry, why is he so negative about profits? There is an inherent ideological conflict in his approach. He wants to get rid of the Treasury oversight because the Treasury is the accountant in the operation and he wants to get rid of profits because they are against the socialist instinct—he would almost go so far as to say that losses are better.

What is he left with? He is left with a wholly producer-oriented corporation which is answerable neither to the Treasury nor to the shareholders because profits are not important. It is interesting that that is almost exactly what happened in the electricity generating industry in the early days. Many people would argue that the way in which the electricity generating industry developed in this country—with very large power generation sets and great unreliability in design and operation—was entirely due to the fact that the engineers and people interested exclusively in the production side of power generation managed to persuade everyone that they had to have huge boilers and huge generating sets. In the

end, those proved to be extremely costly and rather inefficient and took us along a path quite different from, for example, that of the German electricity generators which opted for small units on a dispersed municipal basis. That is the result of a producer-oriented operation which is the logical conclusion of the hon. Gentleman's approach. He does not like the Treasury or profits and his approach leads to an operation that is excessively producer oriented, which is not in the interests of the consumer or the small man in the long run.

The hon. Gentleman is the shadow Secretary of State for Transport and part of his speech dealt with the prospects for the coal industry. I wish to pick up one point that he made in that respect. He believes that the coal industry would be very much in the doldrums if it were privatised. He outlined a very disturbing but, I believe, inherently pessimistic view of the number of pits that would remain if we privatised the industry. I believe that the hon. Gentleman is wrong in thinking that the number of pits will drop to as few as 15. That was one of the possibilities considered in the Rothschild report, but I believe that it is wildly pessimistic.

Internationally traded coal prices are likely to rise in the next few years—that is certainly the view of the Select Committee on Energy—making imports much more expensive. If the power generators place themselves too unreservedly in the hands of foreign coal importers, they are asking to be taken for a ride in terms of prices. If we think that we can merely switch to foreign coal and ignore our home coal producers, there is no doubt that the price of internationally traded coal will rocket. We would be a captive market and importers would clearly increase the price of their coal. Therefore, the threat of massive foreign imports is really no more than a red herring.

The scope for foreign coal will, I believe, be about 10 million or 20 million tonnes a year and no more. Anyone who believes that it will be higher underestimates the disincentive to British power generators of being dependent on the volatility of foreign coal prices, the volatility of the price of substitutes such as heavy fuel oil and the uncertainty of the movement of sterling. There is still a considerable incentive for power generators to buy at home.

Furthermore, we should not underestimate the so-called "location" advantage for British coal which—as we are told in the Select Committee's report—averages about £7 a tonne. It raises the delivered cost of landed foreign coal to about £39 a tonne compared to the British home cost price of about £40 a tonne. The addition of the cost of moving foreign coal from a port to a power station means a substantial premium on the attractiveness of British coal because the location advantage enables us to deliver coal to power stations very much more cheaply than might be thought at first in competition with foreign importers.

Paradoxically, the hon. Gentleman's point about the transportation of coal by rail is an important factor because, curiously enough, the more expensive it is to move coal around the country—we hardly know whether we should want to make it cheaper or more expensive—the more disadvantageous it is to foreign importers because it must automatically increase substantially the price per tonne to move the imported coal from, for example, Hull to Drax. The more expensive it is to move it, the more advantageous it is to British Coal. The ironic question is whether we want expensive coal trains putting a huge extra cost on foreign coal landed in Hull and moved to east or west Yorkshire or whether we want to make it as cheap as possible——

Mr. Prescott: What about gas?

Mr. Alison: I shall deal with gas in a moment. Alternative fuels are not necessarily a long-term safe bet for power generators. Gas may not be as attractive as some people thought. Professor Littlechild, the Director General of Electricity Supply, could rule, for example, that gas station operators were not allowed to pass on to the consumer the full costs of gas power generation, which is now more expensive than coal power generation, as I am sure the hon. Gentleman knows. Gas power generation is becoming more costly. Coal is at present more competitive and if the Director General of Electricity Supply rules that gas power generating operators cannot pass on the full cost of gas but must match the price advantage that coal offers, so they are not allowed to charge more than could be obtained by coal production, gas will cease to be as attractive an option. That is where the regulator may have an important role to play.

Whatever the real prospects for the level of demand for home-produced coal, I am convinced that privatisation itself will not cause redundancies in the coalfields in the next five years for the obvious reason that the privatisation Bill for British Coal cannot be on the statute book before March next year. As the hon. Gentleman reminded us, the present coal contract must be replaced by next March. A new coal contract must be in place by then and that means that the level of demand for British coal in the next five years is bound to be set before the necessary privatisation legislation is passed. It will take at least a parliamentary year and I have no doubt—the hon. Gentleman was right to suspect this—that Ministers will take an active interest in the current negotiations between the electricity generators and British Coal about the contract to replace the present five-year contract.

Whatever deal emerges, it is certain that if privatisation proves to be at all viable, it will be so only if there are five-year contracts in place. The pattern will then have been set in advance of privatisation. If privatisation proceeds, it means, by definition, that there will be excellent prospects for British coal. I believe that uncertainties about the imports of foreign coal and about gas will mean that British power generators will look with some sympathy at the need to give British Coal reasonable five-year contracts with a reasonable level of demand, which will give the coal and the electricity generating industries some stability. Whatever happens will be decided before the coal privatisation Bill is passed, so one cannot argue that privatisation will cause redundancies. There have been redundancies in the coal industry for many years. Whatever else privatisation does, it will not cause redundancies, because if there is a privatisation Bill, it will be on the back of a five-year contract renewed after March next year.

I should like to draw to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Minister one other point simply because miners and managers in the Selby coalfield brought it to my attention directly and vividly in the course of canvassing during the election campaign. Selby coalfield is one of the best and most important coalfields in the country. It is now the subject of enormous quantities of capital investment. It

[Mr. Alison]

has a great deal of modern equipment and some of the best and most efficient productivity records that the industry has ever known.

The main anxiety about privatisation that was expressed to me lies in the direction of mine safety. Miners and managers have told me that it is all very well to have the Health and Safety Executive framework in place broadly to oversee the day-to-day features and problems of safety in the mines. They are genuinely worried about a specific type of situation, such as the one we had, ironically, in the middle of the general election. A faulty roof in an underground shaft caved in. There were some injuries, but not serious ones. There could have been serious loss of life.

Miners and managers are worried about what will happen when the underground engineers and underground managers look at the condition of the roof of an underground shaft. In the old days when management was in place under the existing British Coal structure, it might have decided immediately to close the shaft, take it out of commission and over a reasonably long period to set about reinforcing, repairing or safeguarding the roof. Under a privatised industry with management geared to making profits, there might not be the incentive to adopt immediately a fail-safe approach and to take the shaft out of operation. Instead, management might be tempted to push ahead and use the shaft for a couple more days. In such a situation, the idea of profit might seem to be decisive and might undermine the critical importance of mining safety. The HSE, which would remain in place under the new arrangements, would not be involved in the intimate day-to-day judgment of what was necessary.

I hope that my right hon. Friend the Minister can reassure us about that. I do not believe that the pursuit of profit in private industry leads to the neglect of fundamental issues, such as safety and the well-being of the work force. It certainly has not had that effect in the oil industry. Moreover, we have had many terrible accidents in publicly owned industries.

On a philosophical note, the maximisation of profit has never been a rational, overriding business objective. If the maximisation of profit is made the only rational business objective, it often leads to the collapse of a company. If everything is piled into maximising profits, a range of other matters are neglected and, in the end, the public withdraw their support. Survival is the only rational business objective and it requires the subordination of profit making to consumer satisfaction, safety, the environment, the public image of the company and so on. I do not believe that profit will lead to the neglect of safety in the mines, but I hope that my right hon. Friend will be alert to the problem and can reassure us when the time comes.

Mr. Mark Wolfson (Sevenoaks): My right hon. Friend's point is well made and is based on anxieties expressed to him on the doorstep only recently. In support of his argument, may I suggest that day-to-day management decisions on safety are made in the airline industry in much the same way as in the coal mining industry and that the record of the airline industry is good?

Mr. Alison: I am fully in sympathy with my hon. Friend's comments. He reinforces my point. It is false and unconvincing to say that a business run privately for profit will, by definition, neglect fundamental questions of consumer and producer safety and well-being. If that were the case, private industry would long since have been disallowed by public opinion.

Mrs. Dunwoody: Does the right hon. Gentleman accept that there are strict legal controls on the airline industry and that all those operating aircraft must register their involvement and stick to specific, tough safety laws? Does that make the difference? Does he agree that that should be clear in aviation?

Mr. Alison: The hon. Lady makes a reasonable point. It could be argued that the same applies under HSE requirements to mining. There are the same rigorous, detailed restrictions, limitations and requirements. However, my hon. Friend the Member for Sevenoaks (Mr. Wolfson) and I have been talking about something that is a little more marginal and subtle: the momentary decision by an aircraft operator whether to undertake one more flight or to take the aircraft immediately out of commission if, for example, there is a tiny seepage of oil from a component. No amount of words and regulations will ever cover such a decision. The same situation arises in the coal mining industry. The HSE provides a framework of rules, but often it is up to the judgment of the manager on the spot whether something should be taken out of commission on the grounds of safety.

My constituents have expressed anxiety to me about that and I hope that Ministers will bear it in mind when they consider the privatisation Bill.

5.6 pm

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): I am pleased to follow the right hon. Member for Selby (Mr. Alison) because he has illustrated one of the difficulties. Those of us who believe that safety should be paramount in any major industry know that, whatever he says, the question of profit will come almost inevitably between the operators and their desire to please their shareholders.

I am astonished that the Government should even now include within the Queen's Speech references to privatisation, as if somehow the average consumer does not appreciate what privatisation means in practical day-to-day results in his own home. My hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) made an extremely telling and forceful case when he listed the effects, so far, of privatisation.

I make no apology for emphasising that my constituents know clearly why we do not want rail privatisation in any form. They have seen the effect of Government policies on existing industries. It is vital to point out that the privatisation of industries that already lack investment does not lead to a marvellous influx of a great pot of gold that will somehow provide better services. It inevitably leads to a series of short-term judgments. Management begins by deciding, irrespective of the industry concerned, that there is overmanning. If there must be one entry in the manual of privatisation for conservative management, it is, "Your industry is overmanned".

Let me explain what I mean. British Rail Engineering Ltd. was a large and effective supplier of rolling stock to the railway industry. It is true that its customer was largely British Rail, but it was capable of selling anywhere in the

world and did so. It needed more vigour in its management structures to expand its markets thoughout the world. Yet, because of the Government's narrow-minded and unimaginative commitment to dogma, BREL had to be sold to the private sector.

We were told that privatisation would transform BREL and make it much more efficient, and that everyone would benefit in a country where the railways manifestly needed new rolling stock. What happened was rather different. A management buy-out was proposed to the work force and it was largely engineered by people who were in management. Their intentions may have been quite reasonable; they may have wanted to preserve the manufacturing unit and they may have believed that they had the expertise to do that. The reality was that, largely, those who wanted to invest in BREL did not understand the manufacture of railway rolling stock and were not particularly interested in the maintenance of the manufacturing unit.

In the intervening period, we have seen a classic example of what privatisation means. We have had a large number of redundancies, including redundancies among those skilled workers who are desperately needed to maintain the high quality of our product. The remaining services have been concentrated in a small geographical area, leaving large tracts of available land, which, no doubt, will soon be sold off at very profitable rates by the existing management.

A number of interesting financial calculations have also been made, which have directly affected the work force —not just those who remain with BREL but those who have lost their jobs at the factory. We were first told that the shares of the workers were so important and useful that they were worth a large amount. Indeed, a finance director came in and managed to do a deal which meant that for £100,000 he was able to buy the equivalent of £1 million worth of shares. In less than a year, those shares which were worth £10 each to the work force suddenly became worth £1.

At the annual general meeting, the chairman was asked about the value of the shares. He said that it was based on an independent assessment and was not one that the board itself had reached. That was a perfectly reasonable response, but the difficulty was that he went on to add that the board had subsequently discovered that those who made the assessment were accountants who had a contract with the firm that was seeking to buy large numbers of shares. That firm was ASEA Brown Boveri.

Many people would argue that in an industry concerned with the manufacture of rolling stock, it is better if engineers who know about manufacturing move in. We would agree with that. However, we would not agree with the change that meant that many of the work force were told at the annual general meeting, in my constituency, less than two weeks ago, "Oh, yes. It suited us to have you involved in buying shares when the management wanted them for a buy-out. It suited us to use you as part of the propaganda exercise and to say that we wanted individual working men and women to have shares and to be involved in their own industry. Unfortunately, ASEA Brown Boveri, which is coming in, will want to buy all your shares. If, by mischance, you do not want to sell them, we are sorry, but we have the powers within the existing terms to force you to sell the shares back to the new management." Even if one believed all the rubbish that the Conservatives talk about the little person having an involvement in privatisation, where is that magnificent arrangement now?

What has happened is simple. First, the employees were told that they should buy shares for a management buy-out. Secondly, many lost their jobs and saw the factory run right down. It no longer produces the rolling stock which is desperately needed by British Rail—and which all passengers know will be needed increasingly in the coming five years. The work force have finally been told, many having lost the privilege of working for British Rail, "We are sorry, but those who have shares will have to sell them back to the new company because that is how it will operate".

That is the reality of privatisation. It does not mean anything for the small, individual shareholders. It means that those who have economic muscle will survive and those who do not will be pushed out.

The position is even worse because we were told exclusively in the well-known socialist newspaper *The Times* that the chairman of British Rail had gone to the new Secretary of State and asked him for support in building new rolling stock. The chairman said he needed new investment in the south-east and in other regions and services. He said that there was clear evidence that the railway system needed new engines, carriages and services for the all-important customer. We were told that the chairman of British Rail had spelt out exactly what that meant in terms of economic investment and we were also told that it was made clear to him that the large amounts of money would not be forthcoming from a Conservative Government.

The Select Committee on Transport has taken evidence from British Rail, BREL and numerous other sources in the City on the total lack of interest in the railways felt by those who want to invest large amounts of money. Money has not been forthcoming for British Rail to build private links except in small, easily defined areas. Although private investment has been made by some freight carriers, it is not nearly enough to provide the high-quality service that is essential if we are to have any link between the channel tunnel and the north-west. One of our greatest manufacturing areas is to be deprived of a high-speed link and of trade in the movement of freight because the Government are not prepared to invest in new services.

Over and above that, we have been told that the railways will be much more efficient if a track authority is responsible for the railways and individual entrepreneurs organise services. Are we suggesting that firms such as Stagecoach, the manager of private coaches and buses, which is hardly able to run a service in one town, could run a service responsibly and efficiently outside its own area? Will firms such as Virgin, which is very good at publicity, be able to run a railway system when it believes that it is just a question of latching the odd coach on to the back of a British Rail Edinburgh express? Such firms will not make any difference to the customer and they are in for a shock. Are we suggesting that those people, who do not want to take on the responsibility for running a railway, will somehow or other produce an enormous new age of transport efficiency? If we are, we are not only kidding ourselves but trying to kid the people of this country.

The transport system of Britain requires large sums of investment. The taxpayer and the passenger know that. It is only the Government, who will sell off anything rather than provide a proper service for those who need it, who

[Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody]

refuse to acknowledge the reality of today's transport problems. It is a disgrace that the Government are talking in such utterly shallow and irresponsible terms. Every other western European country provides a high-quality railway system, which is subsidised by the taxpayer, because it understands the link between the movement of freight, the movement of people and the development of its economy. Why is it that such a simple lesson is beyond the bird brains in the Conservative Government?

5.18 pm

Mr. Richard Ottaway (Croydon, South): Having been present at the debate on foreign affairs on Friday without being called, I hope that I shall be permitted to be slightly international in my approach to privatisation.

Having been in this House representing another seat, to say that this is my maiden speech would be stretching the definition of virtue. However, I would not like the moment to pass without recognising the tremendous contribution that my predecessor, Sir William Clark, made to the government of this country. Like me, he formerly represented a Nottingham seat and made a significant contribution to economic thinking for more than two decades. His support for the policies of low taxation and restrained public expenditure, coupled with privatisation, had a strong following in the country and the constituency of Croydon, South, which I am proud to represent.

Privatisation has always been popular in a constituency like Croydon, because it works. Indeed, the only criterion on which privatisation can be successfully defended is whether it works and produces an efficient service. In my experience, it always stimulates the organisation concerned, and that produces a better service.

Privatisation in British Rail is bound to be welcomed in principle in a constituency like mine because, after all, it has nine commuter stations. The greatest concern in an area where Network SouthEast has such a strong influence in the transport of our constituents is that it should be an efficient service, and it is always a lively topic. However, if people like Richard Branson are making bids for the "Rolls-Royce" routes to northern England and Scotland, Network SouthEast is unlikely to be flooded with applicants. To try to run Network SouthEast on profitable and economic lines is unlikely to make economic sense.

Of far more concern to us in Croydon, South is the citizens charter. I was fascinated to read that the charter proposes to set standards, including for the first time individual standards for the 15 groups of routes in Network SouthEast. It goes on to set out percentage reliability criteria and I was riveted to see that the south London line hopes to achieve 97 per cent. reliability and that the Sussex coast line, which goes through my constituency, hopes to achieve 99 per cent. reliability. I must confess that it will come as a surprise to many of my constituents if British Rail achieves such targets.

The commercial heartland of Croydon is diversified and energetic. While it is quick to reject regressive economic policies, it gives a warm welcome to the fast-approaching establishment of a single market in trade, goods and services at the end of this year. Sole traders, small business men and directors of public companies can all see the advantages of a genuine market, which is one and a half times the size of the United States and three times the size of Japan. While we hold the Presidency, our priority must be to ensure that its full implementation is achieved and to remove the frustration of physical and technical barriers to trade. I welcome the commitment to that in the Gracious Speech.

The burning question now is, where do Britain and its partners in Europe go from here? There can be no doubt that the exchange rate mechanism has distinct advantages for business. I recently visited a successful promoter of television programmes throughout Europe, which makes substantial invisible earnings for this country. It always welcomes proposals from companies in countries in the ERM as it knows that the stability in exchange rates provides a basis on which it can do business and make a profit. Proposals from companies in non-ERM countries are received more coolly. Although we can all see the force of argument of those who say that we should come out of the exchange rate mechanism, I venture to suggest that those are the voices of people with little hands-on pragmatic experience of business and industry.

Mercifully, we do not yet have to make the decision about whether to adopt a single currency. Much as the separate economies of Europe may try to converge, despite the tensions and cross currents that flow throughout Europe today, I doubt whether it can be achieved—certainly not within the proposed timetable for monetary union.

Despite my support for the Government's position, I am not a federalist and could not support a united states of Europe. Nothing antagonises the British people more than proposals from Brussels to ban smoking in public places or dictating who is eligible to play in an English football team. I have more faith in Steve Coppell, the manager of Crystal Palace, than in Jacques Delors on that issue. Today Europe must look far beyond the visions of Brussels bureaucracy. Here, privatisation has a role as we successfully export it overseas.

This year is the 125th anniversary of the first appearance of Karl Marx's "Das Kapital", which laid the foundations of theoretical socialism. It contained the impossible promise of an idealistic world, without capital, and opposed to free market economies. Inevitably, it was a dream that ended in failure.

Now, the biggest challenge to the west politically, ethically and morally is the region of central and eastern Europe, stretching as far as the Chinese border. People in those regions must be given hope and I welcome the proposals in the Gracious Speech to give aid to them. We must not let the situation come about in which they begin to yearn for the old days of communism, feeling that they were better off then than in the harsh reality of the present.

Perhaps the best thing that we can do for them is to show how effective privatisation can be. The political imperative is that they see the opportunities that exist in western Europe and for us to set examples that demonstrate the effectiveness of the market economy. Let us give them the aid to transfer their capacity for producing tanks into peacetime production capability. They cannot do that on their own because their will has been progressively eaten away by communism and the difficulty that they face now is a lack of cash. There is concern on both sides of the House that aid to that part of the world is water on sand. But from my commercial experience in the past five years, I know that there are

abundant supplies of natural gas and oil that can help finance the provision of an industrial base on which to build.

We in the west have had the good fortune to be born on this side of the old iron curtain and we can thank our lucky stars for it. The military threat that united all peace-loving people no longer threatens us. Instead, we are overwhelmed by the picture of misery and helplessness. The aftermath of the cold war has been as devastating and complete as any war fought by conventional means.

I believe that an equally dangerous and divisive threat is the possible alienation of the United States of America, as we focus all our attention on Europe. It would be a grave mistake if we let that happen. If ever we need an example of the success of privatisation, we need look only at the power of the United States' economy, where nationalised industry is virtually an unknown concept. In the exchange between the Front Benches, it was well illustrated how the nuclear industry in the United States can survive without Government intervention or capital.

We started this century as a dominant world power, with the United States as a non-servile, dependent nation. It was Theodore Roosevelt who, at the beginning of this century, acknowledged the British Government as an ally sympathetic to the United States over Cuba. As a result of that close friendship, he supported the allies in the first world war against Germany, but by the end of the second world war the tables had turned after the United States bailed us out a second time. They were now the dominant party.

Since then, the United States' contribution towards world peace and stability in Europe has been immense —the Marshall plan after the war; the instigation of the Bretton Woods monetary agreements, which gave us the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund; and the establishment of the United Nations and NATO. Above all else, it was their relentless opposition to the advancement of communism and the misery that it brought that marked out the United States as the superpower of the world. Yet, when they needed advice and support, they always turned to the United Kingdom and our special relationship is alive and well and must not be jeopardised.

In the formal sense, the relationship is the exchange of intelligence, and the establishment and maintenance of a nuclear deterrent. From my time in the Royal Navy I know how inextricably linked the two navies are, with the exchange of information and personnel being commonplace. The Falklands and Gulf wars illustrated what little support we could expect from the rest of Europe when the going got tough. Informally, strong cultural, diplomatic and corporate links, not to mention a common language, bind the two nations together. It is one of the closest political alliances in international politics.

We must not throw that good will away because we are unable to reform the common agricultural policy, which is such a stumbling block to the successful and essential conclusion of the talks on the general agreement on tariffs and trade. Believe you me, there are plenty of people in Washington who would use that as an excuse to pull out of Europe.

The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation could be wrecked by the Community's resistance to cuts in farm subsidies. I am afraid that some countries in the European Community would not be sad if that happened. It is bizarre that we should jeopardise that special relationship in preference to a policy whereby more than 50 per cent. of the European budget is spent on agricultural subsidies.

When the Prime Minister last met President Bush he gave him a cricket bat. I am not sure what President Mitterrand or Chancellor Kohl would have done with a cricket bat, but at least President Bush knew that it was for hitting a ball. The United States can sometimes be an infuriating ally, but I admire its effort, energy and "can do" attitude. We must not throw away that relationship when the sirens of Europe beckon. The United States will remember its friends.

5.33 pm

Mr. Nick Harvey (Devon, North): I am grateful to you, Madam Deputy Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to make my maiden speech in the debate on privatisation. As the Liberal Democrats' transport spokesman, I view with interest the somewhat predictable measures on the privatisation of British Rail proposed in the Gracious Speech. As the Member for Devon, North, I know that my constituents are concerned about the future of the Exeter to Barnstaple line—with which you, Madam Deputy Speaker, as a Devonshire Member, will be familiar—under any future regime that might operate on the railways.

I am glad that the Government are forsaking for the moment the wholesale privatisation of British Rail in favour of access to the network. However, the Liberal Democrats share the worries of the Community of European Railways, of which British Rail is a member, on open access and privatisation. It states that competition to drive down costs and make railways viable is the way forward But if the Government continue to refuse to give all modes of transport the same treatment, British Rail will operate at a disadvantage. I wonder whether some of the private companies that it is envisaged might bid to operate the rail network will look forward to paying in full the infrastructure costs, as British Rail has to. Their competitors in the air and on the roads pay only part of the costs of airport and road facilities.

It is a strange twist of fate that the Government's plans for British Rail's future are being proposed now, at the end of a full and comprehensive, sweeping reorganisation of British railways known as "Organising for Quality". It is popularly known in British Rail's executive circles by the abbreviation "O for Q"—not an abbreviation to be used in a hurry.

The privatisation of British railways is not in the public interest now. We need a Government with the foresight to see the business, environmental and human consequences of their actions. We need sustainable investment in the railways, as in other public transport sectors. If British Rail is to compete with private companies, it needs the tools to do so.

We have heard today from the Secretary of State that the private sector will have capital investment in the railways through franchising, but it is clear that British Rail needs access to borrowing and leasing, as the SNCF has in France. We look forward to the Government introducing a White Paper in the summer, perhaps when they have worked out the answers to questions such as that posed by the hon. Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor).

We also look forward to seeing the Government's proposals for the future of the railways, a subject dear to

[Mr. Nick Harvey]

the heart of my predecessor. One of his proud achievements was to introduce in 1981 private Member's legislation on the reopening of old railway lines. He, like everyone in north Devon, will be disappointed that that legislation did not lead to the reopening of the Torrington loop or the railway lines to Ilfracombe and Lynton, both of which are beautiful. I pay tribute to the hard work undertaken by my predecessor on behalf of north Devon, and on promoting the cause of alternative energy. He went about his business in an energetic and unique way, and his memorable comments will be missed.

In his maiden speech my predecessor paid generous tribute to his predecessor, a distinguised member of the Liberal party, and I shall do likewise. Many right hon. and hon. Members will remember him as cutting a dashing style and being a formidable performer. I cannot aspire to match his panache, but I hope to fight for the area the same tenacity. In his maiden speech in 1959 he spoke in shocked terms of the 9·3 per cent. unemployment rate in the town of Ilfracombe, and argued for the district to have development area status. Today, the unemployment rate in Ilfracombe is 22 per cent., and at times youth unemployment is as high as 50 per cent. Once again, the community of Ilfracombe is fighting to obtain development area status.

Within months of Mr. Thorpe's speech, the Conservative Government granted that status—if only we could look forward to that again. Such status served the area well from 1959 to 1984, since when no significant new employer has moved into the area. My constituents have high hopes of regaining assisted area status for the district, and of seeing the building of a downstream bridge over the Taw river in Barnstaple—a vital piece of local infrastructure if the town is not to grind to a halt and deprive businesses to the north of Barnstaple and the holiday industry of important income.

My constituents had hoped that more might be done about the state of the beaches around the north Devon coast. The south-west has a small population, but it has responsibility for many miles of coastline. When South West Water was being prepared for privatisation, it was given a green dowry to help to plump it up for the process. It now needs green alimony or, perhaps, green child maintenance to ensure that it can continue to bear the heavy burden.

In a few months' time, the Landkey primary school in my constituency will be celebrating the 30th anniversary of the acquisition of the site for a new school. Unfortunately, the existing school has a leaking roof, damp exercise books and open drainage for its outside facilities. I am 30, and the site was acquired in the year that I was born. When I was shown around the school by the chairman of governors, he pointed out the very rail where, as an infant, he used to swing. We hope that, in their education proposals, the Government will ensure that local education authorities have the resources to put right that problem, and many others.

The hopes and needs of north Devon are manifold. Like many other new Members, I was struck by the weight of my mailbag, which was phenomenal. This week, I went to the Post Room to ask for my mail. Nothing arrived for some time, while many right hon. and hon. Members received their mail. For a brief moment, I allowed myself the hope that perhaps my mail had dried up. A plump thud came from above and I was handed a bigger bundle of mail than anyone.

No doubt I shall become used to the strange ways of the House. One of the most surprising things that happened to me was when a party of school children from my constituency visited the House soon after I was elected. One of them had brought as a gift a bottle of champagne. It was not allowed through the security device, but was handed straight to me by the policeman, with the reassuring words, "You had better hold that—it might be a bomb." It had occurred to me that the security arrangements here might be thorough, but I had not thought that suspect devices would be given to Members for safekeeping.

I also managed to get lost in my early days here. Having entered the labyrinth of corridors, I noticed that the carpets had changed from green to red. I had promoted myself, somewhat prematurely, to another place. Unkind cynics might say that when one loses one's way around the Corridors of this place, it could be time to move on there. But I hope to have the honour of representing the people of north Devon for many years before any such thing should happen.

5.39 pm

Mr. Richard Spring (Bury St. Edmunds): May I take this opportunity, Madam Deputy Speaker, of congratulating you on being in the Chair? I wish you well in your new office.

I am privileged to represent the constituency of Bury St. Edmunds and to follow in a line of distinguished parliamentarians. I should like to pay a special tribute to my predecessor, Sir Eldon Griffiths, who entered this House in a by-election in 1964. He was a remarkably successful constituency Member, a Minister and an expert in international affairs. He will be sorely missed by many, both in the constituency and in this House.

The constituency that I represent is probably the only area within a 100-mile radius of London that still feels essentially rural. Bury St. Edmunds itself is a successful, beautiful and largely unspoilt Georgian town. The origins of the town's name lie in the Saxon martyr King Edmund of East Anglia who was killed by invading Danes in 869. A particularly rich and powerful abbey was established there after the Norman conquest, and it was in that very abbey that the barons met to plan the Magna Carta. Bury, therefore, is known as the cradle of the law.

This love of freedom and of liberty remains strong even today in west Suffolk.

Many people will think of Suffolk in terms of our glorious wool churches, but many will rightly think of Newmarket, which I am also proud to represent. It is the horse racing capital of the world, a glittering jewel in our county's crown. The horse literally dominates the town, although, sad to say, the industry today has special difficulties and much needs to be done to help it to survive and prosper. The British bloodstock industry is the finest in the world and a significant employer in my constituency.

Yesterday, in our cathedral of St. Edmundsbury, we celebrated the 50th anniversary of the arrival of the Americans during the second world war. Thousands of them were based in Suffolk and many of them married locally. There are still signs of their former presence all over the constituency, but their presence today is still a

critical part of the lifeblood of west Suffolk. There are two large United States air force bases, at Mildenhall and Lakenheath, which employ thousands of people and contribute about £140 million to the local economy.

The bases are popular with local people; their role, past and present, in defending freedom and democracy is well understood. In Sir Eldon's maiden speech 28 years ago he said:

> "In the Anglo-American alliance we must . . . have enough British power to deter an attack on our island and to ensure that we are not subjected to international blackmail."—[*Official Report*, 16 June 1964; Vol. 696, c. 1156.]

Fortunately, that threat is now much less likely, given the end of the cold war, but, as we have repeatedly seen, Anglo-American friendship has been very important, latterly in the Falklands, Kuwait, and Libya.

In my constituency there is a great range of diverse activity in addition to the important agriculture sector. Some in metropolitan circles may just take the view that those of us who live in Suffolk spend our days gazing fixedly at endless acres of cereals. Nothing could be further from the truth. Our corner of England has been one of the fastest growing and most dynamic in the country. That has almost entirely coincided with the great success that Conservative Governments have had in transforming our country in the 1980s.

We have also benefited from the economic tilt eastwards as our trade with Europe has increased. Freight passes through and is manufactured in my constituency and goes to the port of Felixstowe. What once happened in our ports—it threatened Governments and created havoc with our currency—now seems to have taken place on another planet; jobs for life seem light ages away. Privatisation has brought new methods, new investment and success.

Survey after survey shows that as we continue to come out of the recession west Suffolk will grow and prosper. Central to that prosperity are good communications. Private participation has been brought in to speed up the substantial road improvements in our county, and there is more to be done. Mildenhall and Brandon need bypasses.

The growth of population has come about in part because people have moved to Suffolk with the intention of commuting to London. Unfortunately, some of them have had to give up the unequal struggle because of the poor performance of British Rail. The Norwich to London line through Suffolk is characterised by erratic timekeeping. I have frequently experienced this myself, and it is not for lack of investment. It is due to the poor management that is so tragically characteristic of nationalised industries.

On Easter Saturday some of my constituents were travelling on a diesel train between Cambridge and Ipswich. At Bury St. Edmunds station the engine started smoking. Undeterred, the train continued its journey, and a few minutes later the engine exploded and a piston from the engine entered the passengers' compartment, causing injuries. What ensued would have been farcical had it not been so serious. I shall not dwell on it except to say that when my constituents set off on an Easter Saturday to visit their relatives in Clacton they should not be made to feel as if they have landed in the midst of a Scud missile attack, albeit in rural Suffolk!

Leaves, snow, fires on the track—we are all used to these; and doors that do not open when the temperature drops we have read about. It is highly regrettable, however, that, four weeks after the event I have described, I have yet to obtain any information about the safety and operating procedures to be followed when a train engine malfunctions.

British Rail needs private input. It clearly needs to serve both passengers and its workers better.

Before I conclude, I want to say a few words about a constituency that I fought as a parliamentary candidate and for which I have the greatest affection—Ashton-under-Lyne. It is represented here by a right hon. Member of great experience and distinction, but, with full respect to him, I would also express the hope that one day it will return a Conservative Member to this House.

I am the third Member of Parliament for Bury St. Edmunds to rejoice under the curious surname of Spring. The first two appeared to survive the difficult politics of the 17th century with considerable ingenuity, if not with obvious convictions.

Incidentally, I am sorry not to have congratulated earlier the hon. Member for Devon, North (Mr. Harvey) on his excellent speech. We look forward to hearing many more such excellent speeches from him in future.

On the subject of convictions, my constituents need have no fears. I look forward to representing their interests and their needs in this House for many years to come, and to doing so always as a member of the party in government, with ever-growing numbers of colleagues joining me here.

5.48 pm

Mr. William Etherington (Sunderland, North): I realise that the first thing that I have to do in my maiden speech, Madam Deputy Speaker, is to address you properly and to congratulate you on your new post. I wish you every success and fulfilment in it.

I have been waiting since 14 December to make this speech and it could not have come at a more appropriate time than in a debate on nationalisation—on the end of a nationalised coal industry and rail industry. I am proud to represent the constituency of Sunderland, North, which has a wonderful record of parliamentary support dating back to the 1640s, when the people of Sunderland ensured that coal was sent to London to support the parliamentary cause, after the citizens of Newcastle and South Shields put a blockade on coal to ensure that the Parliamentarians were not successful. At one time 40 good Wearside ships were tied up by the blockade of the Tynesiders, but in the end we were successful and the seamen joined the parliamentary forces and were able to drive the Royalist forces out of the north-east—and so on to victory. Everyone should be as proud of that as I am.

In 1832, Sunderland was granted two MPs and the records from then until 1945 show some strange combinations. Sunderland returned primarily Liberals until the turn of the century. At odd times a Conservative sneaked in when the Whigs and the more radical element in the Liberal party could not agree and put up too many candidates. Perhaps that is a lesson for modern times. It was not until 1906 that the Labour party, of which I am proud to be a member, took a Sunderland seat. The going from then was not easy. There were failures and we did not have two Labour Members until 1950. That was sad because many other parts of the country did rather better. There were only two Conservative Members representing

[Mr. William Etherington]

Sunderland from 1900 to 1906, from 1922 to 1929 and from 1931 to 1935. Our record since then has made up for that.

I intend to make the most of my maiden speech because I understand that in future speeches I am likely to be heckled, but that is par for the course with me. After the Representation of the People Act 1948, the two constituencies of Sunderland, South and Sunderland, North were formed. I am delighted to say that since then Labour has always won the North seat. The tremendous response by the people of Sunderland to the Labour party is demonstrated by the fact that Fred Willey, whom some older Members may have known, was successful in no fewer than 11 general elections spanning 38 years. That is a tremendous record. Sadly, I did not meet him because, although I was born and lived in the constituency, I did not live there at that time.

My predecessor, Bob Clay, unexpectedly retired late last year, thus giving me the chance to attain my ambition of getting here, albeit rather late in life. He is now doing his best to revive shipbuilding on the River Wear, an industry which, sadly, has almost gone. I should not need to remind the House that during the war the Sunderland shipyards produced 25 per cent. of the replacement capacity when we were losing ships in that terrible time. The shipbuilding record on the Wear was second to none and it is sad to see it in such a poor state. When trade takes up again, hopefully after 1995, perhaps there will be a revival.

Bob Clay will never be forgotten for his work in the constituency to try to keep the shipyards open or for his tremendous work in trying to help the nuclear test veterans, a worthy cause if ever there was one. I shall try to continue in the same vein in representing my people.

I should like to pay tribute to one or two other former Members, one of whom was George Hudson, "the railway king," an MP for Sunderland for many years. He would have been interested in today's debate. George Hudson had one or two financial problems which shows that there is nothing new on the stock exchange. He found it necessary to leave the country for a short time and was in Spain and France for almost two years trying to sort out his businesses there. He did not do too well in Britain but managed a little better abroad. While he was away, a general election was called unexpectedly. There was much opposition to George Hudson because it was said that he had not been to Parliament or to the constituency for more than two years. However, the Sunderland people are rather forgiving because when he promised to mend his ways they duly re-elected him. Unfortunately, due to his pressing business problems which he never seemed to resolve, he had to give up, although he was voted out in the meantime.

Another person worthy of note is Samuel Storey, a Liberal who started a newspaper empire. He was unusual because he got to Parliament in 1880 at a by-election at which he was unopposed. That sort of thing happening today takes some imagining. I certainly do not remember it in my lifetime. He won three general elections between 1885 and 1895 and was returned again in 1910. He changed his colours to become an Independent Tariff Reform candidate but had to give up after 10 months because of bad health. His grandson, who became Lord Buckton, was Conservative Member for the town from 1931 to 1945, contining a worthy tradition which exists to this day because the family still lives in the town and is still involved in the newspaper industry.

My favourite is Thomas Summerbell, the first Labour MP from 1906 to 1910. He was a great worker for the town. He helped to set up the town council and continued the radical tradition which has always existed in Sunderland, with one or two short exceptions. He carried out tremendous work for Labour on the town council. Tragically—and there is much tragedy in politics—a few days after his defeat in 1910 he attended a town council meeting and died from an attack of apoplexy. It seems that fate stalks in pairs, because Thomas Summerbell's agent, Thomas Dale, was killed in 1916 in a zeppelin attack, and that set back Labour's prospects.

The Labour MP from 1929 to 1931 was Dr. Marion Philips. There are not many women in Parliament now, but there were even fewer then, so her election was something of a landmark. Dennis Pritt became one of the greatest socialist lawyers in history after his unsuccessful attempt to enter Parliament.

I shall now turn to the more contentious issue of denationalisation. I like to use the old-fashioned word rather than the new term of privatisation. The Government wax lyrical about free enterprise and competition. I am not so sure about free enterprise because I worked in it for a short time. I found nationalised industry much better organised and we were much better treated, although we had to work just as hard. I see the sense in competition, but where is it? Water, gas, telephone services and electricity have been denationalised. I have only one water supply in my house and I cannot decide whether to turn on Northumbrian water or Thames water. Therefore, there is no competition.

I do not have gas because my village is not that far advanced. I have electricity but only one supply; and in terms of the telephone, least said, soonest mended. Conservative Members speak about the benefits of private enterprise and competition. Where is the competition? Industries that were great national assets and public monopolies have become private monopolies. The only competition I have seen is the scramble for shares and the scramble among directors and chief executives to see who can get the highest salary. The competition among those who work in those industries is to see who does not get made redundant.

Workers' conditions have worsened and prices have increased. The whole thing has been a complete charade, and I am worried that the coal industry and British Rail will go the same way. Do hon. Members forget that coal and the railways had to be taken over by the Government in two world wars because in private hands they were inefficient? Has anyone forgotten the ramshackle state of the coal industry when it was taken over in 1947? Why has everyone forgotten that between 1923 and 1947 only the Southern region, as it is now, paid ordinary shareholders any dividends? But the Government propose a return to that system. For years, the Tory party led us to believe that privatisation had to be good and nationalisation had to be bad. It was difficult for those who were too young to remember to argue against that, but now we see the alternative, and it is much worse than the service to which we were accustomed.

I worked in the coal industry for 21 years—I doubt that many hon. Members can say that—and for nine years before coming here I represented workers in that industry.

What worries me about privatisation of the coal industry is the appalling safety record that the privatised industry had before 1947. There was carnage and there were terrible injuries. Between 1947 and 1979, that gradually improved. Sadly, since then, it has deteriorated again. There is no denying that: the figures come from the Health and Safety Executive, not from the National Union of Mineworkers or the Labour party. They come from a Government body and they tell the story.

Wearmouth colliery is the largest employer in my constituency and two months ago, in a tragic accident, two men were killed and two others were made paraplegic. One of the men killed and the two men who were made paraplegic were my constituents. I have been to see the two who are still alive and the widow of the one who died, and what concerns them most is that Government spokesmen could not wait to get on the television, not to express sorrow, but to say that the record of coal industry safety was improving—a claim that can be proved to be untrue.

I make a plea to those on the Government Benches: do not denationalise the coal industry. Like my colleagues, I know what that will do. I am afraid that the Government do not. I am worried because, at the same time as talking about denationalisation, the Government are working with the Health and Safety Executive to dilute legislation on safety in mines. In 1830, my townsmen, led by Dr. Clanny and others, were involved in the first Sunderland committee, which started the long haul towards good safety in the mines. They were responsible for getting the first Acts dealing with safety in the mines passed. Only France had such legislation before Britain. Between then and 1979, there was continual improvement in regulation of the mining industry. At the very time when the Government are talking about denationalisation, they are also talking about dilution of legislation and regulations. That is a recipe for disaster. I ask members of the Government, as decent reasonable human beings, to reconsider.

6.2 pm

Mr. James Hill (Southampton, Test): Mr. Deputy Speaker, may I add my congratulations to the many that you must have received over the past few days? We have a worthy Deputy Speaker and I congratulate you now as I would congratulate you in person.

The hon. Member for Sunderland, North (Mr. Etherington) made an impassioned speech, on which I congratulate him. His intensity and directness, and the challenging tone of his speech, made me feel that, when the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) retires, he will have left a worthy successor.

Mr. Skinner: That is because I taught him.

Mr. Hill: The hon. Member for Sunderland, North may be a pupil of the hon. Member for Bolsover——

Mr. Skinner: One of them.

Mr. Hill: We must nevertheless be grateful that we are getting fresh blood—perhaps not quite as fresh as we would like—on the Labour Benches, although we are hearing some of the old stories.

There is no longer any doubt. No plea can be made. The Government have made up their mind on privatisation of parts of British Rail. The hon. Member for Sunderland, North mentioned the Southern region. That is a prosperous region and should, in no time, be looking to the Government and the marketplace for finance for investment in new track, rolling stock and other equipment. We have had a difficult time because some of the new rolling stock was incredibly badly designed. There were many cases of people being trapped—some inside a carriage and some outside—while in some carriages there was a danger that they might fall out. This went on for some time.

Then, last year, we heard about the terrible hazard of leaves on the track. Not just thick snow but the mildest of winters seem to be able to put vast sections of our network out of play. Southern region would be the ideal region with which to begin a privatisation programme. The private investor would invest in Southern region. Passenger services could be run not only with private investment but on the basis of franchises.

British Rail's standards of punctuality leave much to be desired. I know that the passengers charter says that there will be compensation for late arrival, or even late departure, but it will take a tremendous bureaucracy to check on that and thousands of commuters will be making claims practically every other day. As has been said, it will be difficult to organise all of British Rail. The Government will not be able to franchise some sections of track, but those sections cannot be ignored either. For community value reasons alone, some of these out-of-the-way, non-profit-making sections on the periphery of the railway system will still be the Government's responsibility.

Therefore, the plan is to sell off parts of British Rail. For example, the freight and parcels operation could be sold. Once again, as in the case of every other public industry that has been sold off to the private sector, we shall have to have an overseer on the lines of Oftel. There will have to be a group that ensures the highest standards in, for example, punctuality, efficiency and safety.

Whenever an industry is privatised, it is claimed that safety standards will fall, but that has not happened in many parts of our vast privatisation programme—in British Airways, for a start. The British Transport Docks Board was privatised, becoming Associated British Ports. Many of these industries had an appalling safety record, but profitability includes profits of all kinds. In Southampton, we have the example of Associated British Ports, which, as everyone knows, controls 19 other ports besides Southampton. It has made tremendous progress and can justifiably say that it has put new heart into the city of Southampton. It has built private dwellings and offices and is building a container port, thereby attracting more cross-channel services, and more and more cruise ships are calling in. Since the demise of the national dock labour scheme, it is able to compete with practically every other port in the area, not only in the United Kingdom, but on the continent.

That privatisation and others such as those of British Airways and the National Freight Consortium show that one does not have merely to believe; one can see the results of privatisation. The problem is that those who will not see will never see. They will go to their graves muttering that privatisation will never work.

Mr. Jimmy Hood (Clydesdale): The hon. Gentleman is talking about seeing. Perhaps he will tell us before he resumes his place where he sees competition in the gas, water and electricity industries, and in British Telecom, in Southampton.

Mr. Hill: British Telecom is certainly involved in competition. There is franchising, and other firms are installing telephone boxes in the street in competition with British Telecom. The process is gradual. The nation must have the confidence to take on former well-established public industries. In many instances, that requires a colossal amount of collateral. It is true that British Telecom has many rivals.

British Gas has Ofgas to control its price structure, and we have all seen how effective that control has been over the past few weeks. The same is true of practically every other denationalised industry. For example, an extremely effective body is overseeing water charges. For the first time, the water industry is making contributions to the National Rivers Authority to ensure that our rivers become unpolluted. The sea shores of the United Kingdom will become less polluted. In Southampton, the former Southern water board used to stockpile sewage during the hot summer months and then dump it in the middle of the Solent. I shall not go into the question of which Government did or did not pay to maintain water sewage and normal renewal pipelines, for example, but we have reached the stage when a desperate problem is being tackled. The NRA should be congratulated. It must be recognised that pollution can be dealt with only from within the industry, which manufactures its own profits and uses them to renew pipes, for example.

I wonder whether the debate will reach a sensible conclusion. We are dealing with one of the most political issues that have ever come before us, apart from council housing. The issue is such that the view of practically every Member is set in cement, as it were, when we come to consider it. I am certainly set on the issue of privatisation, and I am aware that other hon. Members will face an extremely difficult problem.

I have not talked about the coal industry because we do not have any coal mines in the south of England of which I know. I shall leave it to more worthy Members to tell the Government in Committee exactly why the coal mining industry should not be privatised. I recognise that following almost any privatisation there is an examination of the number of people who are working in the industry, and there is some over-staffing in practically every industry of which we can think.

When there is a change from public to private control, people are made redundant. That has happened in Southampton, where many dockers were made redundant. Fortunately, they received an extremely handsome golden handshake. It is perhaps curious that 450 of them took their redundancy payments and formed their own stevedoring company. I am pleased to say that that has made 450 capitalists. They are extremely happy to work through the day and night and have a tremendous reputation in the port of Southampton. I see the reaction of those on the Opposition Front Bench. If members of the shadow Cabinet do not believe me, I invite them to talk to the men concerned. A tremendous effort is being made in Southampton to make the private sector work extremely well, and I shall be pleased to see that extended to the Southern region of British Rail.

6.15 pm

Mr. John Heppell (Nottingham, East): It is with great pleasure that my first words in the Chamber, Mr. Deputy Speaker Morris, are to congratulate you on your appointment and new position. I suspect that, like most new Members, I look upon the making of my maiden speech as something of an ordeal. The ordeal has been made much less daunting by the many hon. Members who are now in the Chamber. Perhaps that is a reflection on my personal popularity.

I understand that it is traditional to pay tribute to one's predecessor, and I am happy to do so. Michael Knowles became the Member for Nottingham, East in 1983 and surprised everyone, including himself. In 1987, he surprised himself again by holding the seat. I am relieved to say that I was able to spare Michael a third surprise. Last weekend, I read, for the first time, his maiden speech, which was made in 1983. That speech alone is enough for Michael to deserve tribute. It must have required great courage to make a maiden speech in defence of local government. It made him no friends in the Government of the day and it flew in the face of party dogma. I would have been proud to make that speech, and I shall refer to it later.

I pay tribute also to Bill Whitlock, whose old constituency of Nottingham, North forms most of the area which I now represent. I thank him for his hard work in the constituency and for his personal help.

I understand that someone who is making a maiden speech is given a great deal of leeway, and I do not propose to abuse that tradition. I shall confine myself to three main concerns. First, I am an ex-railwayman, a member of a rail union, a supporter and advocate of public transport and a user of public transport, so the House will not be surprised to learn that my first concern is the privatisation of British Rail, in whatever form. At the entrance to the Chamber there is a statue of Winston Churchill. I am told that as Conservative Members enter the Chamber they touch Winston Churchill's foot so that some of his talent and skill might rub off on them. It is ironic that a party that so reveres that man and the work that he did should now try to undo some of that work.

It was Winston Churchill who put country before politics and nationalised the railways. He did so not in the name of party dogma but for the public interest. How sad and tragic it will be to see dogma triumph over common sense.

If common sense is applied, what will privatisation mean to the railways? Will it improve efficiency? I think not. Will it improve effectiveness? I think not. Will it make trains run on time? I think not. Will it make the travelling public—the passenger—better off? I think not. Nye Bevan said, in effect, that we do not need a crystal ball to see what the Tories are going to do. It is all there in the record books. We do not need a crystal ball to tell us what privatisation will do. That is all in the record books too. Public monopolies are now private monopolies and underpriced shares have cost the country billions of pounds. Higher profits have been followed by job losses. Investment in research and development have been slashed. The price of privatisation is a worse service.

Who benefits from privatisation? Is the consumer a beneficiary? The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster told us today that the consumer does benefit. Is that true? No matter what the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster says, water charges have risen above inflation while water company profits have continued to rise. The benefits are enjoyed by the shareholders. Gas prices have risen above inflation, yet the profits of British Gas continue to rise. The benefits go to the shareholders. Telephone charges have risen above inflation, yet the profits of British Telecom

continue to rise. The benefits go to the shareholders. Electricity prices, despite the drop in the price of coal, have risen above inflation, yet the profits of regional electricity companies continue to rise. The benefits go to the shareholders.

The picture is clear—it was heightened yesterday by remarks by the Archbishop of Canterbury—and it is that the consumer is suffering at the expense of the shareholder. What price the citizens charter now? There is nothing in privatisation for the consumer, but there is plenty in it for the managers and shareholders.

My second concern is just as important, but more frightening. Last weekend the Conservatives celebrated —and presumably are still celebrating—the local election results. They have a right to celebrate because they achieved a good result. However, we must not forget that they are still only second in local government—the Labour party is still number one. Nevertheless, the Conservative party made significant advances, almost as good as the advances made by the Labour party in the general election. It deserves its right to celebrate and I would not want to pour cold water over that.

I have a worry, however, that concerns not just the Labour party but all who support democracy at both local and parliamentary level. It was evident to me, as I am sure it was to other hon. Members, that there was apathy during the local elections. The turnout was dreadfully low. That shows a picture of despair. A large number of people throughout the country are beginning to believe that their votes mean nothing and that they can change nothing. That is dangerous for us all.

We need only to look at the recent events in America, where traditionally there are low turnouts in elections, to see the dangers that that presents. The riots in Los Angeles did not result from one jury giving a ludicrous verdict; they did not result from a few policemen showing evident brutality to somone in their custody; they were not simply race riots—they happened because America has long accepted an underclass. In a land of plenty, there are those who have nothing. There are those who have no stake in the American dream, those who are homeless, those who are unemployed, those who exist by begging, by benefits and by worse, and those without hope who have lost their faith in the ballot box. That was the reason for the Los Angeles riots and we should not complacently believe that that could not happen here.

It was in my constituency that William Booth launched his crusade against poverty in the early 19th century, yet still in my constituency there are 8,500 unemployed, families living in poverty and people living on the streets. As a nation, that is something that we cannot—and, I hope, will not—tolerate.

Michael Knowles, when referring during his maiden speech in 1983 to the injustice of the rate support grant, said that he did not believe that there was an imminent danger of the people of Nottingham burning down the castle as the Luddites did in protest at the indignities and injustices of their time. I am happy to tell the House that that is still the case. However, we cannot be complacent about the social problems that we must overcome if we expect that to remain the case. Poverty must be tackled by Members on both sides of the House.

My third concern is that if we are to ensure that people feel that they have a part to play, if we are to improve the environment for our citizens and if we are to help people to recognise that they have a voice, we cannot do it from the House. It must be done in the community, nearer the people. The best vehicle to deliver that is local government.

In my short time as a Member of Parliament I have been amazed by the antipathy and antagonism that many hon. Members, on both sides of the House, display towards local government. That is also, I believe, a threat to democracy and to our way of life. My predecessor saw it in exactly the same way. He spoke of despair in local government, of a feeling of already having been judged guilty, of the Government tightening the noose and of the end of 1,000 years of local government. All my experience shows me that he was right then, and he is right now. Why cannot we, at a national level, trust the people? Why do we interfere with the very democracy that we profess to support?

In my constituency, Nottingham city council has raised £42 million from the sale of council houses. Why is it not allowed to spend that money to help the homeless, if that is what it has democratically decided to do? Why cannot Nottingham county council use its money—I stress that it is its own money—to build new classrooms for a school that is overcrowded, if that is what it has democratically decided to do? Why cannot we trust the men and women, from all parties, who give so much in public service, whose careers suffer and who do not enjoy the salary of a Member of Parliament? They often live on a pittance as their reward for their commitment and concern. Why cannot we let them get on with the decisions that are properly local decisions, and stop interfering? They are accountable to the people in the same way that we are accountable to the people. Why is not that enough?

I agree with what my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) has said—there are only two ways in which councils should be accountable, at the polling station and at the police station. There is no justification for any other controls. We need to free local government, to free the country and to free the people from central control. It is not just the Scots and the Welsh who want devolution—every council chamber in the country is shouting for that independence.

Part of my role in the House will be to do all that I can to protect local government, of whatever political persuasion, from the excesses of central Government, again of whatever political persuasion. If I can be successful in that task alone, the time that I spend in the House will not be in vain.

6.28 pm

Mr. Alan Haselhurst (Saffron Walden): There are so many congratulations to be offered that it is difficult to know where to begin, but I shall do so by congratulating you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on your appointment.

I also congratulate the hon. Member for Nottingham, East (Mr. Heppell). Among a number of hon. Members making their maiden speeches today, he showed tremendous fluency. We appreciated his speech, and in particular his generous tribute to his predecessor Michael Knowles. I say that with some feeling because Michael was a close friend of mine. From the hon. Gentleman's accent, I guess that he, too, came as a stranger to Nottingham. Michael Knowles served Nottingham, East very well during his time in the House, and we thank the hon.

[Mr. Alan Haselhurst]

Gentleman for his acknowledgement of that. We trust that he will also have a successful time in this House, and we look forward to listening to him again.

I pay tribute to others who made their maiden speeches this afternoon, and particularly to my hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Mr. Spring). It was nice to hear a maiden speech from a Member of Parliament from East Anglia, and especially my hon. Friend's excellent contribution. I welcome my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, South (Mr. Ottaway). It is very good to see him back on these Benches.

I gained the impression from the speech of the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) that he was not so much contributing to a debate as electioneering for the Labour party post that he seeks. That impression was heightened by the absence of any of his opponents to lend support to his speech. The greatest cheers came when the hon. Gentleman was recycling out-of-date socialist concepts. They did not receive many votes in the general election, and the hon. Gentleman ought to keep a sense of proportion.

My own approach is one of caution, because I do not believe that privatisation was one of the principal reasons for the re-election of a Conservative Government—though I acknowledge the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Bury, South (Mr. Sumberg) that those who became shareholders from privatisations weighed that in mind before casting their votes.

Had I been ordering priorities in 1979, at the start of a Conservative Government, I doubt that I would have placed privatisation at the top of them; but I have warmed to privatisation as a consequence of my observations of the industries affected and of my conversations with those who work in them.

It is important to free public sector companies from Treasury control so that they are at liberty to obtain resources in other ways. Privatisation has also boosted management, provided incentives to employees, and demonstrated degrees of increased competition.

We are beginning to establish a regulatory system to protect public and consumer interest. We are still on a learning curve in our use of different methods, and in awarding different powers to various regulators, but we now have evidence that they are cracking the whip quite hard. I welcome therefore the references in the Gracious Speech to moves towards the privatisation of coal and the railways. Although I was born in a south Yorkshire mining village, I shall not say anything on the subject of coal—not least because many other hon. Members want to contribute to this debate. I will confine my remarks to the railways.

I suppose that we might all consider ourselves experts on the railway system, because we travel either occasionally or regularly on different parts of the network. We could probably all claim that we have, at various times, suffered at the hands of British Rail. Any rail company will inevitably have its bad days, but sometimes the public suspects that British Rail has more bad days than it should. We all take an active interest in improving the system for our sakes and those of our constituents, whose letters about the inadequacies of British Rail account for a fair proportion of our postbags. Politicians get the blame for whatever happens.

It is not good enough to do nothing about the present arrangements. It is right that we should ease the grip of Treasury control, which would give the railways a chance to obtain revenue from other sources. The Treasury has been too closely involved in the railways' detailed work.

I draw the attention of the House to type 321 rolling stock, which is among some of the newest on British Rail. My constituents were pleased when I was able to tell them that the Cambridge line was at last to be provided with new rolling stock for the first time in living memory. Unfortunately, my efforts ceased when the principle of new rolling stock was accepted, and I did not go on to take any detailed interest in its design.

When the new trains arrived, they were a serious let-down. They were clearly influenced by Treasury concepts, and designed to accommodate as many passengers as possible. I believe that "pack 'em in and pack 'em tight" is the principle upon which the Treasury works. It produced the most ghastly rolling stock, and it is a great shame that that was the determining factor. The sooner that it gets away from that approach to running a railway, the better.

When I am told by Ministers that I should not get carried away with the idea that officials become too involved in such detailed considerations, it has all the believability that flies are not attracted to rotten meat. I have no doubt that the sticky hands of officials are all too evident on the plans affecting almost every detail of improvements to our rail system—and that must stop.

In general, I do not believe that British Rail's management is as good as it should be, and it must be improved. It has been proved time and again in the public sector that, if managers' plans are countermanded by officials and politicians, they will despair and move into the private sector. Managers, if they are worthy of the title, want to be the real bosses.

British Rail also has a communications problem. The public are frustrated that its management has failed to get through to the operatives the importance of conveying passenger information and that it is better to explain why a train was late. All kinds of modern communication techniques are available, yet they are not regularly and reliably used. That also is a management fault. Employee morale could also be improved. If British Rail employees are given an opportunity to invest in the network, they will bring greater commitment to it.

What should be our objectives? We must want greater investment, improved efficiency, better reliability, and greater comfort. Should not comfort come into it when determining the type of trains that run on the system? Why should passengers have to rub knees with those sitting opposite them? They may or may not find that an enjoyable experience, but it ought to be possible to design carriages that do not make that necessary.

How can those objectives be achieved? Perhaps the simplest concept is a track authority separate from those responsible for running services on the track. That concept is easy to understand, but it leaves great questions to be answered.

Mr. Adley: Everyone knows the questions, but no one has the answers.

Mr. Haselhurst: My hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley) is more expert in these matters than I am. However, the superstructure of the track

authority should not impose too great a burden of cost on those who operate the system—and it is easy to see that it might do so.

We must also ask how it would ever be possible to finance new track. Many hon. Members want rail track to be opened up: I am one, in that I want more track to be provided to enable a service to Stansted airport to run without conflicting with the needs of my constituents who are regular commuters on the line. I also want to know how we are to put more money into the system. It may be possible through the franchising of stations, or through the sale of of land, to enrich the sources of money for a track authority. We shall need to pursue such questions.

Mr. Adley: Would not the Government be wise to recognise that the railways are part of the nation's transport infrastructure and not just another industry? Having recognised that, should they not look less to the privatised industries that have emerged in the past few years than to the lessons that could be learnt from other countries—especially our European competitors—which have tried to find answers to the questions that my hon. Friend and the rest of us are posing and to which none of us has found the answers?

Mr. Haselhurst: Indeed, we shall have to ask a great many questions. Although I consider it right to move in this direction, I agree that we do not have all the answers yet and that we must find as much evidence as possible from as many different places as possible. I do not think, however, that we should begin by being defeatist.

Obviously, it is possible to improve access to the system. We already have such access through freight: Foster Yeoman, for example, is already running its own wagons on the British Rail system. It is more difficult, however, to see how open access can apply in the case of passenger traffic—not impossible, but more difficult. There is restricted scope for head-to-head competition; there are not many routes in the country where there are alternatives. The hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) laughs, but there is certainly more than one way to go to Scotland, and it is possible to envisage competition between the east-coast and west-coast routes. Similarly, there are two ways of going to Cambridge, and competition is possible there. Unfortunately, there are not two ways of getting to Birmingham now, as there used to be. The possibilities are very restricted, and a different sort of competition is possible only where different services on, say, InterCity routes could be run by different companies.

I am prepared to contemplate that, because I think that it might lead to a ratcheting-up of standards as new ideas are introduced to the running of our railway system. Great care will have to be exercised, however, with the interchangeability of tickets and the integration of the timetable. Perhaps the most sensible method is to franchise routes as a whole, or to franchise present sectors of British Rail as a whole. It might be possible, for instance, to franchise the west Anglian line, the Great Northern line and the Great Eastern line so that they are run according to certain standards. That might improve the reliability and quality of those lines. I think that the idea is worth pursuing, and I shall watch with great interest as the Government's plans unfold.

Let me return to my starting point. There must be a better way of running our railways. The Government are right to be uncomfortable with the status quo; certainly, many of our constituents are uncomfortable with it. I therefore view the Gracious Speech and its new approach with an open and welcoming mind, and I believe that a good deal of gratitude can be earned if we manage to get things right during the current Parliament.

6.43 pm

Ms. Helen Jackson (Sheffield, Hillsborough): I congratulate you on your new position, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I thank you for calling me.

I speak with some humility in this, my first maiden speech—indeed, my only maiden speech. That is not just because of the traditions of the House; it is also because, as the new Member of Parliament for Sheffield, Hillsborough, I am very much aware that my predecessor spent many years in the House, made a magnificent contribution to its debates and will be a hard act to follow.

I first knew Martin Flannery and his wife Blanche in 1973, when I went to live in the part of Sheffield in which I live now—my present constituency, which, as the constituency of Penistone, was represented then by Jack Mendelson. After his death, it was represented by Allen McKay.

One of the things on which Jack Mendelson and his colleague Martin Flannery worked tirelessly in 1973 was the exposure of the iniquitous military coup in Chile—financed by the CIA—which caused the death of Salvador Allende, then leader of the Government, and led to the death, imprisonment and torture of many thousands of Chileans. I worked with my predecessors then to open the way for students, trade unionists and many other brave men and women from Chile to find a refuge in this country. I know that Martin Flannery, like me, is very concerned about the reference in the Queen's Speech to the reintroduction of the Asylum Bill; that will make it much more difficult for people who have suffered torture to find refuge here.

I suppose, however, that Martin Flannery's main concern was education. He brought to the enormous amount of political work that he did in the House a deep practical knowledge, arising from his own experience as a head teacher and his understanding of the profession of teaching children. When I was canvassing during the recent general election, I found that virtually one person in every street in one area of Sheffield had either been taught by Martin Flannery or been to school with one of his relatives. His deep practical knowledge of education was invaluable, and I am sure that the House will wish to join me in congratulating him on the honour conferred on him by the National Union of Teachers, which made him an honorary member at Easter.

Martin Flannery was deeply troubled by the damage done by the Conservative party to the morale of schools and colleges over the past 13 years. I read with great concern the weasel words "extend choice and diversity" in the Queen's Speech. What does that mean in education? How many parents whose children passed the 11-plus—in those bad old days of the 11-plus and meritocracy—chose, because they had the choice, to send their children to secondary modern schools? How many parents of children who did not pass the 11-plus, and who therefore did not have the choice—unless they had the money to opt out of the public system and send their children to private schools —were able to do the same?

[Ms. Helen Jackson]

Extending choice for the rich and fortunate in public services always reduces the standards for the many. We shall need to return to those arguments later in our debate on the Queen's Speech.

Let me now turn to the subject of today's debate. If privatisation is an ugly word in terms of education, deregulation is an even uglier word in terms of south Yorkshire's transport system. One of the best things about the area of Sheffield in which I live, when our children were growing up there, was the cheapness of public transport. In their half-term holidays, if they wanted to go for a swim in Rotherham, visit the market in Chapeltown or go to the shops at Hillsborough corner, it cost them 2p. To me, that represents real choice and diversity.

The results of deregulation are now clear to everyone living in south Yorkshire—and, indeed, are accepted universally, with one or two exceptions; there are still a few backwoods Tories around. The fares went up; the number of passengers went down; the number of private car users went up; the buses became older and dirtier; there was no overall planning. It is impossible to obtain a timetable for south Yorkshire buses any more. Ridiculous congestion is caused by competition for routes in the centre of Sheffield. Thousands of jobs have been lost and the very good training centre run by the bus company has been closed. There is no one to complain to when things go wrong; one is just shunted from one place to another.

If that experience of how to dismantle a good public transport system is transferred to the railways, there will be disaster. Under this Government, trains and rolling stock are old and dirty. Are they going to get older? Are we going to go back to the days of steam? Since 1979, under this Government, fares have risen 30 per cent. more than inflation. Fares in London are more expensive than in any other capital city. Financial planning, co-ordination and looking to the future have already suffered while British Rail has been preparing for privatisation by breaking up the system into different elements. Manufacturing jobs have suffered as a result of under-investment. By 1991 we had spent less capital on the rail infrastracture than any other EC country, apart from Greece and Ireland.

Perhaps we should ask whether that really matters. Of course it matters. It matters for a range of reasons, but fundamentally because of the number of private cars and lorries on the roads. We are told in "Road Facts 1992" that by the year 2000 car traffic will increase by 36 per cent. and lorry traffic by 27 per cent. Something must be done about that. One fifth of all carbon dioxide pollution in Britain is caused by road transport. The only way to address that problem is sharply to increase investment in public transport, both on the roads and on the railways. If we are to create a healthy future both for ourselves and for our children we must slow down the use of private transport. I support wholeheartedly the measures that were so forcefully put before the House by my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott).

I shall be raising other issues on behalf of my constituents. In my constituency there are 200 ex-employees of Newton Chambers Engineering. When that firm went into liquidation the financiers got hold of it. It was sold, and then sold again. Eventually the pension money of ex-employees ended up in the hands of those who administered the Maxwell pension funds. They now have to wait month by month to see whether their cheque comes through.

I shall also be raising health issues, in particular health and safety standards in the steel industry on behalf of the many people who work at Stocksbridge Engineering Steels. I shall press for the acceptance of lung disease as a recognised normal industrial hazard within the steel industry. I shall raise issues concerning community care. An increasing number of elderly people in my constituency do not enjoy the necessary day and community care services that would enable them to end their lives with dignity, instead of being subjected to exploitation by some of the most obscene forms of privatisation—the mushrooming number of private homes for the elderly.

I regret the fact that the Queen's Speech offers little hope to my constituents that their aspirations to jobs, prosperity and a better quality of life will be realised in the near future.

6.54 pm

Mrs. Angela Knight (Erewash): Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for inviting me to make my maiden speech.

I congratulate the new hon. Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Ms. Jackson). We have known each other for a number of years. We served together on Sheffield city council and we live only a few miles apart. I was particularly interested, therefore, to hear her most informative speech and the points that she made about Sheffield. I must confess, however, that I was not aware that her constituents are interested in Chile.

It is a privilege to be a Member of the House and, in the established tradition, I wish to pay tribute to my predecessor, Peter Rost. He represented Erewash and the former Derbyshire, South-East constituency for 20 years. He was highly respected throughout the area for all the work that he undertook on behalf of his constituents. He was a member of the Select Committee on Science and Technology in this place and a founder member of the Select Committee on Energy. It was there that his particular interest lay. All those who knew him will, I am sure, agree that he was one of the most knowledgeable Members of Parliament on energy matters. Now that he has retired, that interest and expertise will not be lost.

I now have the honour of representing the Erewash constituency. It is a diverse area in Derbyshire. It contains beautiful countryside and villages and also the principal towns of Ilkeston and Long Eaton. It has lower than average unemployment and a high proportion of the work force is employed in manufacturing industry. Textiles and light engineering are two of the principal industries in that area. Textiles, including lace, are an important part of the local economy. There is a widely held but incorrect belief that lace is, somehow, a cottage industry that employs a few people working by hand in back rooms. The truth is very different. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer visited a modern, computerised lace mill in my constituency during the general election. I am grateful to him for his visit to Birkins, as are those who work there. One machine in that factory produces 70 miles of lace a week. There are 80 machines in that lace mill alone. It is a vibrant and automated industry that has been able to invest substantially in new equipment and plant throughout the 1980s. It now looks forward with confidence to the future.

Lace is both a tradition and a necessity. Many women wear a bit of lace close to their heart, most of the time. That fashion is unlikely to change. It is also a good export for this country. However, despite good investment and productivity, the trade restrictions of other countries can present trading difficulties for companies in my constituency. I look forward to the speedy conclusion of the talks on the general agreement on tariffs and trade, as set out in the Gracious Speech.

Light engineering is one of the other principal industries in the area. I worked for 15 years in the engineering industry. I saw the decline in investment during the 1970s and took part in the revival in investment in manufacturing throughout the 1980s. However, I am still saddened to hear some politicians talking down British industry. The reality of the last 13 years is that investment has increased, that exports have grown and that productivity has immensely improved. Just before the election, a survey was undertaken of businesses in the east midlands. That survey, published last week, shows that over three quarters of Derbyshire businesses could see that recovery was coming strongly. With the outcome of the general election now known, confidence has improved further. The privatisation programme has been fundamental to the transformation of the performance of British industry.

Nationalised industry was a byword for inefficiency and low productivity. Nationalised companies lost taxpayers money and competed with other demands on the public purse for capital investment. Management did not have the freedom to manage. It ultimately had to meet political requirements. It could not therefore make the business decisions that were necessary, and there was no incentive for enterprise. Those of us who worked in industry knew it because we saw it. Following privatisation, those former loss-leaders of industry have become profitable companies. They pay taxes into the Exchequer rather than take money from it.

In the few days that I have been a Member, I have heard Opposition Members say that all that should be done is to keep as much industry as possible nationalised and change the rules so that they can have access to additional private finance by one route or another. Indeed, I heard that this afternoon. Their proposals for nationalised industry borrowing would still affect public expenditure plans and therefore would be limited by political constraints rather than by business requirements. The freedom to manage would be lost, yet that freedom has brought success to privatised companies.

The massive investment that is now being made in the water industry to improve purity of water is resulting in extensive new pipework being laid by the water companies. Many of those pipes are made in my constituency. Stanton Ironworks is in Erewash. It is now a large, viable privatised ironworks that had formally been languishing in the public sector. It is a principal supplier to the water industry, which now has the ability for massive investment. None of this was possible when both were nationalised concerns.

I look forward to the other improvements that will flow from the programme for industry outlined in the Gracious Speech. Through Erewash runs the midland main line railway. Connected to that line, and lying within my constituency and that of the neighbouring constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester), is a large and under-used railway siding, which would be an excellent rail head for the channel tunnel. It would generate more employment for the area and increase local prosperity. I look forward to it being developed as a road-rail freight haulage centre. It will bring opportunity for my constituents and for the east midlands, but that opportunity will come only with the proposals for the liberalisation of British Rail and freight that have been outlined.

There is a wider aspect of the public ownership debate. From the five years that I have spent in local government, I can tell the House that I am a passionate believer in local government. But just as I am a passionate supporter of it, I equally passionately dislike seeing local government run badly. The introduction of competitive tendering has been essential in ensuring that local government seeks ways of administering the services of the area more effectively, at a lower cost and at a benefit to those who live there. One of the pluses of competitive tendering has been the highlighting of inefficiency and waste, so long hidden in a fog of bureaucracy.

As a councillor in opposition on Sheffield city council, I saw the expression "local democracy" used as an excuse to grasp as much control as possible for the town hall and then to do what a group of councillors wanted rather than what the people needed. Too many times, I have witnessed a council flouting the desires of parents and schoolchildren even when there was no financial reason for doing so. That is not true local democracy, nor is it public accountability as it should be.

I know that there have been debates in past months in the House on the affairs of Derbyshire county council, and I suspect that there will be more. Erewash education is administered by Derbyshire county council. It is making budgetary decisions that are against the wishes of parents, governors and schools throughout the county. My constituents object, as they know that their children will be adversely affected, and unnecessarily so. Indeed, I believe that the Labour party was lucky that there were no county council elections last week. If there had been, Derbyshire could easily have done a Basildon.

I do not make the erroneous assumption that, because some local authorities ignore the wishes of the electorate, all of them do. But, undoubtedly, the Government's Education Acts have empowered school governing bodies to make decisions, after listening to parents' wishes, in a way that local authorities would find difficult. That has truly empowered the people.

The proposals in the Gracious Speech for further progress to allow parents choice, to give children greater opportunities and to continue to raise standards in education and allow more schools powers of control over their own affairs are particularly important to my constituents. Local councillors do not have to run everything. Councillors are elected not to run a rubbish collection business but to ensure that that service is provided. Equally, Members of Parliament are elected not to run a steel works, a telephone company or a water board but to ensure that industry has the right climate in which to operate and that those processes and procedures are regulated and that standards are set.

True public ownership is about individuals owning shares in companies, including those for which they work. They then have a real stake in their industrial future. In local government, public ownership is about parents being involved in the running of their schools, and schools having independence of action within the state system.

[Mrs. Angela Knight]

Under the citizens charter, every citizen is entitled to expect high standards of openness, information, choice and redress with the public services. I look forward to playing my part in the legislative programme that has been outlined in the Gracious Speech, as it will bring real benefits to my constituents.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. The debate is now subject to the 10-minute rule. It may assist hon. Members if I point out that the colon between the hour and the minutes on the clocks will flash after nine and a half minutes have elapsed.

7.7 pm

Mr. Cynog Dafis (Ceredigion and Pembroke, North): I am grateful to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for allowing me the opportunity of making my maiden speech.

There is real concern and anxiety in Ceredigion and Pembroke, North about the Government's intention to privatise parts of the rail services. There is some sense of relief that BR will retain control of the track—for the time being anyway—and that the intention to sell off InterCity or to create private regional companies has been shelved.

My constituency is served by two railway lines of much importance—to Fishguard, with its harbour and ferry service, and to Aberystwyth, a prestigious centre for higher education and research, which needs an efficient railway service. My constituents and I will be looking for guarantees that those services will be maintained—enhanced, rather. Indeed, I think that there is an opportunity for new track and new routes in whatever changes occur.

I am glad to read that the Government are committed to increasing the role of the railways in meeting the country's transport needs, but my constituents are looking for action, not words. There can be no avoiding the need for substantial public funds to provide a satisfactory railway infrastructure. It is difficult to understand how privatisation would facilitate the development of an integrated system of rail, road and telecommunications which is one of the crying needs of Wales and, indeed, of Britain as a whole.

Increased emphasis on rail transport is important not only for the economic prosperity of west Wales and, of course, of my constituency but for the benefit of the environment. It is a well-established fact that rail transport is infinitely less damaging to the environment than road transport. I am told that a train carrying only 100 passengers can achieve 250 passenger-miles per gallon equivalent compared with 30 passenger-miles per gallon equivalent achieved by a car carrying one person. A similar picture emerges if one considers freight transport. Clearly, that has significant implications in terms of the levels of carbon dioxide emitted into the atmosphere by the two forms of transport.

The very mention of the words "environment" or "CO_2 emissions" cannot, I hope, fail to remind hon. Members of what has been called the most important meeting in the history of the world—the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development to be held in Rio in a few weeks. The prospects of success at that conference should above all else be exercising all our minds at this time. Its title reminds us that development and the environment must henceforth be inseparable concepts. We know of the crying need for economic development among the poor peoples of the world, but all development must henceforth be sustainable in terms of the natural systems that make life possible or, at the very least, tolerable on planet earth. At present, the signs are that the measures likely to be taken by that conference in Rio will fall far short of what is necessary to save our planet. I do not think that I am using overly dramatic language when I use words such as "to save our planet".

On climate change, the likely failure is in large part the result of the thoroughly irresponsible behaviour of the United States of America which, with 5 per cent. of the world's population, is responsible for 25 per cent. of the world's CO_2 emissions. The United States were, at least until recently, predicting an increase of 40 per cent. in the use of coal in order to meet a 46 per cent. increase in electricity demand by the year 2010. It is the United States' objections which have blocked an international agreement to stabilise CO_2 emissions at 1990 levels by the year 2000.

The terrible thing is, of course, that even an agreement to stabilise CO_2 emissions at 1990 levels by the year 2000 would be woefully inadequate. Present levels are, in all probability, unsustainable and may very well be causing deadly damage now. Reference has already been made to conditions in Africa and there is a possibility of a link between the terrible drought in southern Africa and the phenomenon of global warming. Present levels of CO_2 emissions may be causing deadly damage now and could possibly lead to catastrophic climate change.

The United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has called for a reduction of 60 per cent. in global CO_2 emissions. One can only hope that the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for the Environment are aware of the deadly seriousness of the matters at issue and that, if necessary, they will go to Rio with a commitment to reduce unilaterally and significantly CO_2 emissions in Britain. Of course, to meet such a commitment would require a strategy involving several elements. One of the those elements would be an integrated transport system and a shift of emphasis from road to rail transport.

I mention only one other element of such a strategy. As 36 per cent. of Britain's carbon dioxide emissions come from the burning of fossil fuels for the generation of electricity, there is enormous scope and a crying need for an ambitious programme of conversion to non-polluting renewable sources such as wind, tide, wave and hydro. It so happens that my constituency and western Wales in general have enormous potential for such sources. I hope that hon. Members will know that with an economy facing a crisis resulting from serious difficulties in agriculture and the threatened run-down in defence establishments, west Wales requires a strategy for economic renewal. The development of such a strategy within the existing political framework lies, of course, with the Secretary of State for Wales, his fellow Ministers at the Welsh Office and the Welsh Office itself. That is where the responsibility lies. I believe that such a strategy must include substantial public investment not only in the infrastructural development, including the railway, but, to a significant extent, in roads.

There must be changes in energy policy on a British, European and global level. I am very disappointed that today's debate on energy and transport has not mentioned the global context in which they must operate. In view of

the fact that those changes must come, renewable energy generation could play a significant role in a development strategy for west Wales. However, my anxiety is that such renewable resources will be exploited—as has so often been the case in Wales where water and opencast coal mining are just two cases in point—for the financial benefit of powerful external forces but with minimal benefit for the communities in which the resources are found. I fear that that will happen again with renewables.

A development strategy for west Wales must ensure that renewable energy generation provides the maximum benefit for the area, which implies the retention of a substantial proportion of the profits so that they can circulate within the local economy. That would be best achieved at least partly by developing a degree of co-operative ownership, which is not quite the same as state ownership.

It is my conviction that the establishment of a democratic Parliament for Wales is the only satisfactory way to provide the right economic and social development for our country, and that is a point that I must emphasise. It is also a point with which my predecessor, Mr. Geraint Howells, who was regarded with great affection and respect in the House and in his constituency, would agree entirely. In the next few years, the Secretary of State for Wales and the British Government in general have the opportunity to prove me wrong.

7.27 pm

Mr. Robert Adley (Christchurch): First, let me congratulate you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and say what a pleasure it is not only for Conservative Members but for hon. Members of all parties to see you looking so cherubic in your post. We congratulate you and wish you a long and happy tenure of the Chair. It is good to see you there.

May I also congratulate the hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Dafis). His party did incredibly well to win four seats in Wales although I do not know what the message is. I recall that following the Scotland and Wales Bill the referendum in Wales produced a stunningly large majority against any form of devolution, yet Plaid Cymru now has more seats than the Scottish National party. One day, no doubt, the hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North will explain to the House where he thinks Wales is going.

May I also congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Erewash (Mrs. Knight) on a spiffing speech. It was fluent and constructive and showed that she is politically and commercially experienced. It was a pleasure to hear and a privilege to be present. We do not have much time so I shall deal immediately with the Loyal Address.

It is the first time in more than 20 years that I have spoken on the Loyal Address and I am minded to do so because of the two sentences on page 3 of the Queen's Speech which state:

> "My Government are committed to increasing the role of the railways in meeting the country's transport needs. Legislation will be introduced to enable the private sector to operate rail services."

The supposition is that sentence two will enact sentence one. That is not yet proven, but I certainly hope that that will be the case. Otherwise, we will all be in a great deal of trouble.

I do not doubt the Government's motives. I had considerable doubt about the transport policy of the Conservative Government under my former right hon. Friend Margaret Thatcher. She was perceived, rightly, in many quarters as being hostile to the railways. That is not the case with my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. He was generous with his time with me before the general election. Therefore, I give him and his Government the benefit of the doubt, certainly about the motives expressed in the Queen's Speech. Few hon. Members would pretend that British Rail is perfect. In passing, I declare a commercial interest only in that it lets me know that some parts of the British Rail empire are urgently in need of surgery if they are to make the best use of the national assets at their disposal.

The railway is an essential component of the modern industrial state. One cannot judge a railway by normal commercial criteria. It is not a monopoly; it must compete with road transport where all the track costs are funded by the taxpayer. Moreover, the private motorist does not cost-in his own time. As I suggested in an intervention in the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Saffron Walden (Mr. Haselhurst), the Government should assess their plans for the future of our railways not by comparing the railways with other industries that have been privatised, but by the experience of our competitor countries, Germany, Japan, France and Switzerland, many of which have considered railway privatisation and found it wanting.

I turn straight to methods and that second sentence in the Queen's Speech. We must define the need. We must weld private sector discipline and management expertise on to the public service obligation of the railways. It would be ridiculous to create conditions under which British Rail would be disadvantaged in its access to funds vis-a-vis the private sector. This afternoon we have heard few comments about safety being paramount. Whatever happens there must be no question of any reduction in the high level of safety which has always been imposed by this House on the operators of railways, whether in the public or private sector.

There must be a continuing role for Her Majesty's Government in both rail investment and rail subsidies. Some of the methods not even considered in this country are applied by many of our international competitors. They have a determined policy to promote the role of rail travel. What thought is being given to utilising the tax system to encourage the use of rail freight? What time is being spent on examining incentives to use the railway, or disincentives to use the road? I hear little of that, yet in Germany, for example, that is a standard way of generating the utilisation of the state railway system.

The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) discussed the need to allow British Rail to borrow funds from the Treasury. The SNCF has been doing that from the French Treasury for years. The excuses or reasons not so to do from Treasury Ministers, however one looks at them, are almost beyond my comprehension. We need to invest more in our transport infrastructure. If the French railways can borrow money without a French Government guarantee, we should be able to do the same here.

People ask whether we need any legislation on the railways. We do. Shortly SNCF will want to run trains on British Rail tracks. If the Government were a little more frank, they would tell us that to enable SNCF to run trains on British Rail track through the channel tunnel there will need to be an amendment to primary legislation. If ever the

[Mr. Robert Adley]

private sector manufacturers get round to producing the necessary rolling stock to enable channel tunnel trains to be run, we shall need to legislate.

This is not the time to examine the paving Bill in detail, but the Committee will need to consider clause 1(5) which states:

"The powers conferred by this section in relation to any proposal shall be exercisable whether or not Parliament has given any approval".

I believe that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland is to reply to this debate. Let me use a Scottish example to make a point about investment criteria. After 20 years in this place I managed to secure a debate on 23 March 1990 on railway investment criteria. It is little less than scandalous how investment in roads is given such priority by the Department of Transport in relation to investment criteria. Why did we not build a rail bridge across the Dornoch Firth when the road bridge was built? That is a classic illustration of failure to create a level playing field for British Rail.

Earlier in the debate my hon. Friend the Member for Basildon (Mr. Amess) spoke about the Southend line and my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) mentioned it today. That line has been starved of investment and has a rotten service. Compare the service on the Southend line with the service on the Chiltern line, which was recently extensively modernised with new track, new signals and new rolling stock. The customers are satisfied, revenue is up and passenger numbers are rising. Investment is essential.

My main question is: do the Government think that any forthcoming Bill will generate private-sector investment into our railways and, certainly, our commuter railways? Nobody in his right mind who runs a business will invest heavily in capital equipment, use it for four hours a day, five days a week and leave it idle for the rest of the week. That is no way to run a business, but that must be done if we are to enable commuters to get into and out of our major cities.

I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Basildon will not hold his breath until Richard Branson comes along and provides a new railway service on the London-Tilbury-Southend line. That gentleman is very good at public relations, but his ambitions for the east-coast main line seem to be to piggyback on a major slice of public investment. In the past few years £500 million has gone into that line. To cherry pick a few of the juicier bits and pieces of the railway system does not help us to judge whether private operators will invest capital in our railways.

We have a complex rail system. *[Interruption.]* The lights are flashing and I must conclude. The BR timetable has 1,392 pages and costs £5.50. That is good value for money. I urge my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland to suggest to his colleagues that before they risk tearing it up and destroying one of the best railway systems in the world, whatever its faults, they should read the timetable and see what is involved.

7.27 pm

Mr. Eric Clarke (Midlothian): I congratulate you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on your elevated position, and I thank you for calling me to speak today.

As this is my maiden speech, I should like to pay tribute to my predecessors who formerly represented Midlothian in the House. Alex Eadie served here for 26 years. He was a Minister in the Labour Government, a Front-Bench spokesman and an able Back Bencher. I am sure that he earned the respect of Conservative colleagues as well as Labour colleagues and I hope that the House will join me in wishing him all the best in much deserved retirement.

In the past, three miners represented Midlothian: Jimmy Hill of Musselburgh prior to Alex Eadie, and David Pryde of Bonnyrigg prior to Jimmy Hill. They were all men of the people and active trade unionists in the National Union of Mineworkers.

I have the same background. I was a miner who worked underground for 26 years prior to the 12 years that I served as a trade union official. In addition, I have 16 years' experience in local government as a county councillor and regional councillor for Lothian.

I am proud to be a socialist and a trade unionist, especially as a member of the National Union of Mineworkers, an organisation brought about to protect miners and their families from the coal owners of the past, the bad legislation that came from this House and I might say the present bad legislation that may happen but I hope will not.

Victimisation of miners was rife in the past and we still have victimised miners in Midlothian and elsewhere who cannot get work in the industry. It was because of the trade union that we protected many of these innocent people and raised the much-needed standards of safety required in mining underground. It is a sad day when the Government propose to privatise the British coal industry. Mrs. Thatcher wanted us to return to Victorian values; the Prime Minister wants us to return to the dark ages of the coal owners.

At present, miners working in private mines are worse off than those working in British Coal mines. The accident rate per thousand shifts is three and a half times worse in private mines than in British Coal mines. The statistics are exactly the same as the accident rates in the United States of America. Private enterprise is not beneficial to miners as far as the accident rate is concerned. Miners in private mines have no "self rescuers", a small apparatus carried on the person of every miner underground which is used in a fire to protect them against smoke inhalation and could have saved many lives. They were introduced as a result of the disaster at Michael colliery in Fife, but private mines do not supply them to their work force. In most cases, private mines have no pithead baths and no work wear system as of right—the free issue of laundered overalls and underwear to men who work underground. The redundancy agreement for those in private mines is the basic minimum industrial agreement on the statute book and it is a pittance compared with that for people covered by the British Coal scheme.

Privatisation does not just affect miners and their families; it affects this country. The short-term profit motives of extracting coal, as against the long-term protection of all potentially workable coal measures within a colliery, is the priority of the private coal owners. We have had hundreds of examples throughout every coal field of short-sighted exploitation of such measures, spoiling and sterilising millions of tons of coal for ever.

I am pleased to see that the two Parliamentary Under-Secretaries of State for Scotland are present. I am worried about the situation in Midlothian and what will

happen to Monktonhall colliery on privatisation. It is a colliery on "care and maintenance", so will it be included in the overall Scottish sell-off? Will Scotland's coal assets —opencast and deep-mined units—be sold as a package? If the Government really care about the future of the Scottish coal fields, I propose that they sell off the coal industry as a package in order to create wealth for the owners to develop the deep-mined coal measures and resuscitate Monktonhall and Frances collieries in Fife and provide much-needed employment in the areas. As someone who really cares for the coal industry and its people, I hope that common sense will prevail if privatisation takes place.

I have read with great interest the maiden speeches of my predecessors, which contained pleas to the Governments of the day for the protection of indigenous industries—for example, the Scottish shale oil industry, the paper-making industry and obviously the coal mining industry. There is no longer a shale oil industry in the Lothians because of the withdrawal of subsidies to the industry, causing many people to become unemployed in the past. There is only one paper-making mill left in Midlothian when there were many in the past and there is only one colliery, Monktonhall, which is on a "care and maintenance" basis. The deindustrialisation of Midlothian can be repeated throughout the whole of the United Kingdom and Government after Government, not the representatives of Midlothian, are to blame We, as a country, are left with the uncertainty of importing goods and materials which will result in mass unemployment throughout the country.

We must protect our indigenous industries, we must expand job opportunities based on high-tech industries and new ideas. We are internationally famous for discovering new ideas and processes, but we are woefully bad at manufacturing them. We need training for high skills and diversification from our defence industries and we need to retain and retrain a highly skilled work force, which is being made unemployed. The Government must intervene. We need help to encourage firms to diversify and we need money to be put into training establishments to bring about such a highly skilled work force.

I will continue to repeat, whenever the opportunity arises, that the people of Midlothian and elsewhere must be given the right to work and should have a standard of living equal to that of those living in any other area of the country. It is not for them the double standards of having a few who are rich and the vast majority who are poor.

7.35 pm

Mr. Mark Wolfson (Sevenoaks): It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Midlothian (Mr. Clarke), who spoke from his own hard experience and from the heart. I congratulate him on his speech and we all look forward to hearing more from him.

It is my particular pleasure to congratulate you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on your assumption to the famous office of Chairman of Ways and Means. We shared one part of the route to Westminster when we both stood, I after you, as, I regret to say, the unsuccessful candidates for the old Islington, North constituency—not a constituency known today for returning Conservative Members of Parliament. I congratulate you on your new office and I wish you well in it.

There have always been two key reasons for privatisation. The most important is that it removes the burden of financing investment programmes from the public sector to the private financial markets. The second reason is also of real significance. The management of privatised industries can no longer look to Government to bail them out of loss-making activities. That same management is no longer directly constrained or supported by Members when it makes changes of national significance such as the decision to close a plant or to run down production in response to the market force of customer demand.

Nationalised industries become very inflexible in responding to market demands—they were often discouraged from such flexibility by demands made in the House for the protection of constituents' jobs—and that did not help them to remain competitive in the world markets. I am thinking in particular of the steel industry of the past. Such inflexibility caused that industry great problems when it was forced to change its structure as a result of changing markets in world demand. Those problems have continued until today.

I remember when Sir Anthony Meyer, a former Member, spoke of his experience in his constituency when the Shotton steelworks were closed. He regretted the fact that he had opposed the proposal, made in an earlier Parliament, to run down those works because such a rundown would have been much easier had it occurred outside a recession rather than in the recession of the early 1980s. So, when we have deployed arguments here in what we have considered to be the best interests of our constituents, they may not always have been in the long-term interests of the industries. I have never seen a good reason why industries that can run themselves properly within the private sector should unnecessarily be owned by the state. They nearly always end up being a financial burden to the state as well.

Two thirds of the state-owned sector of industry has been privatised in the past 12 years and losses in it have been turned into profits. Nationalised industries were receiving subsidies of £2·5 billion in 1978-79, equivalent to more than one third of that year's health service budget. In comparison with the need to fund the health and education services, spending Exchequer money on industries that could support themselves is not a good use of public money.

Now that they are back in the private sector, those industries are making profits, and they contributed some £2 billion to the Exchequer in corporation tax last year. That revenue will continue, quite apart from the massive £42 billion raised from the capital receipts of privatisation. Those proceeds have enabled the Government not only to achieve record spending levels on health, education and —despite many of the arguments deployed today—on transport, but to repay substantial amounts of the accumulated national debt. We publicise that fact too little. It has significant bearing on how other countries view the health of our economy against the present higher public sector borrowing requirement planned for the medium term. A healthy pound is evidence of that positive regard in which the overall budgetary structure of Britain is presently regarded overseas.

Through privatisation, share ownership has spread dramatically throughout the population. Thirteen years ago, only one in 20 of the adult population owned shares, whereas today it is almost one in four. Most significantly,

[Mr. Mark Wolfson]

that increased ownership is far more widely spread. Two thirds of share owners are now to be found outside the ranks of professionals and managers. I represent a constituency in the south-east of England and must point out that 60 per cent. of those shareholders live outside the south-east. The Labour party would do well to ponder that fact as it considers why its policies on renationalisation and its continuing commitment to clause IV may have affected the general election result.

Those are good reasons for privatisation but just as vital to this debate is the fact that the nationalised industries did not give a good standard of service and caused widespread dissatisfaction to customers. We can all remember the telephone installation that took weeks, the public phoneboxes that were filthy and seldom worked and the gas and electricity engineers who missed appointments and often had to make several calls to households before the job was done.

The contrast now is obvious and voters know it, even if the Opposition do not. Telephones are rapidly installed and consumers have a lot of choice in the type of installation that they prefer. It is now difficult to find a callbox that does not work and they are clean. Service calls by gas and electricity engineers are reliably organised on a morning or afternoon basis. Acting on its own initiative, East Midlands Electricity has introduced appointment times, rather than just stating that workers will come in the morning or the afternoon, and will pay compensation if appointments are not kept. That places the consumer in a dominant role, receiving a better service from the privatised industry.

The role of the regulator in privatised industries that are still monopolies is still absolutely key. I welcome the example of the gas industry regulator demonstrating that it will use its teeth, as we heard last week. The importance of the regulators cannot be underestimated in the fight against inflation, particularly in those industries where improved technology is making lower unit costs possible each year. I look to the regulators to take that into account when allowing the increases in charges by monopoly privatised industries. We expect them to deliver a better service to the customer at a lower cost.

The Government's approach towards the privatisaton of the railways is sensible and right. We are not going the whole hog immediately but approaching it steadily and cautiously. But the introduction of private capital into the operation of the railways will give passengers a better service and stimulate management, as it has in every other privatised industry, to put the customer first and to do a more effective job.

7.46 pm

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): I join others in welcoming you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to your post this evening. With your interest in medical affairs, I am sure that you will be interested in the fact that, throughout this debate, no place has been given to the medical and social services side.

In the context of privatisation, I acknowledge that there is no intention to privatise the health service but, with the movement that is going on, there is great concern about the setting up of, for example, the Social Security Agency. I am not sure whether it is happening elsewhere, but there seems to be a cosy relationship between the agency's main office in Belfast and British Telecom. When people phone up, they are told to hold on. They hold on and on, and are then told that they will be put through to another department. They are then told that their call will be returned, but it is not. People on social security benefit do not like wasting money. It may be a cosy relationship because of the restrictions on chatlines and to help British Telecom make more profits. I do not know, but I should like to think that the Social Security Agency would be more outgoing in looking after people's needs with greater efficiency, as it still comes under some scrutiny from the House.

I pay tribute to the maiden speeches that I have heard, particularly those of the hon. Members for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Ms. Jackson) and for Erewash (Mrs. Knight). The hon. Member for Erewash commented on competitive tendering. I should like to think that, although we in Northern Ireland may have different problems from others, there will be greater control over what is happening. I was interested to discover not so long ago a company that had been on the list for selective tendering had been removed. I had written earlier to the Department to draw attention to the fact that it was not doing its work properly and was employing people on the double. I had received a letter informing me that that was wrong, that the company was reputable and that it would take anybody who made such allegations to court. I promptly replied that I looked forward to that day. The company was removed from the list because 80 per cent. of the work force on one contract were already being employed by the Department of Social Services—on benefits. So that is a case of competitive tendering in which the very Department is unware of who is receiving the benefits, and a firm's work force are then in a position to undercut the local council or other firms in tendering for services.

If we are talking about privatisation, we must also consider the way that the privatisation is undertaken. I have no axe to grind: if privatisation would be good for the community, by all means privatise. But I pay tribute to the successful outcome of Harland and Wolff and Bombardier Short in maintaining two industries working in a part of the United Kingdom where there are grave reductions in industrial manpower.

I also pay tribute to hon. Members who have served in Northern Ireland. I have not always agreed with them—a privilege enjoyed by hon. Members—but they have worked for Northern Ireland. Although there are those who think that Northern Ireland is a dead water, I suggest that it is a promotional spot for the governor of Hong Kong, and the Foreign Secretary has discovered that he did not do too badly having been at the Northern Ireland Office. In the context of industrial development in Northern Ireland, I pay tribute to the present Minister for Trade, who worked tremendously hard to bring investment into the Province.

To return to social services in the context of privatisation, I never thought that the problem that some of us envisaged about the arm's length inspection units dealing with the statutory, voluntary and private sectors would be resolved as now seems to be the case: by the abolition of the statutory sector and its replacement by the private sector. I regret that the Department seemed to be putting pressure on social service units, both within the direct management of the Department in Northern Ireland and within local government responsibility, to close

homes, which meant the opening of more private homes. The time will come when, no matter who are in Government, they will have to introduce amending legislation because of the pressures on the public purse created by the escalating costs in the private sector.

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster has today been called the Minister for little people. We have heard about the charter of rights, and parental choice in education. My constituents know that that is a myth. The Department closes schools and reduces the size of rolls so that infants intending to go to primary school cannot be taken into the school of their parents' choice in their local catchment area, but have to travel at least a mile to another school which is not necessarily the parents' or the child's choice. The child often has to go to a school outwith the community of his or her friends.

I welcomed the Prime Minister's statement on 6 May that consideration would be given to setting up a Northern Ireland Select Committee. It is good to know that fruitful talks on Northern Ireland are in progress. I underline again that the position of a Select Committee is not the responsibility of negotiating parties outside the House, but is the responsibility of the House. I urge the Government to introduce the necessary legislation to set up a Select Committee on Northern Ireland at the beginning of this Session so that we shall not have continued late scrutiny of some of the tragic mis-spending of the finances in Northern Ireland Departments.

I remind the usual channels of the understanding that the other Select Committees would be set up, not six months later, but immediately. I hope that, before the summer recess, those Select Committees will be set up. It is the responsibility of Back Benchers to scrutinise the affairs of Government Departments, and a Select Committee is the most efficient way of doing so. Perhaps that is one reason why some people are not in any urgent rush to see them set up. But as a Back Bencher, I plead that they should be set up speedily.

Last week, I wondered whether there was any significance in the fact that the right hon. Member for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker) moved the motion on the Loyal Address in a debate in which the Prime Minister later revealed the name of "C". Did that signify the fact that we would no longer need moles and that there would be open government or was it mythology, with the Government giving the impression of being open, but still concealing?

In future, will the Government answer questions asked by Members, or will the Government respond that the relevant information is not collected centrally, and can be gathered only at disproportionate cost? If there is to be open government, surely hon. Members should be in a position to know what is happening in the community so that they can bring an informed opinion to the House.

I welcome the fact that there has been a movement to improve security. However, I regret that it was not a secret, now revealed. Many years ago, when speaking to a noted officer of the Army in Belfast, I illustrated an incident by saying, "MI5 has been at work." He said, "Not MI5." We have had evidence of a perfect Government answer that tells us nothing that we did not know already. However, we have found evidence of a link, with Government talk about a new movement dealing with Irish loyalists as well as Irish republicans. What does that mean—loyal to Dublin?

7.56 pm

Dr. Robert Spink (Castle Point): It is a tradition that I should be allowed a word about my predecessor. I have a hard act to follow, and I wish that I had £1 for every time that I have been told that. I follow someone whom this House holds in special affection; he was one of the most respected Members of Parliament of the post-war period. Sir Bernard Braine was first adopted for the seat that I now hold two years before I was born.

Sir Bernard carried with distinction and dignity the office of Father of the House, a position to which I do not aspire. However, my aim is to follow in father's footsteps, though you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, will be delighted to hear that tonight I shall not be challenging Sir Bernard's once-held record for making the longest speech in the House. He did so to protect his constituents. Should circumstances arise when my constituents require protection, I trust that I would display all the determination and character, the tenacity and courage that never failed Sir Bernard during his 42 years as a Member of Parliament.

I thank the people of Castle Point for electing me; they are intelligent and discerning. We are a wonderful community, with excellent schools and increasingly superb hospitals. If only we had a railway line, everyone would want to live in Castle Point. That brings me to the Fenchurch Street line—the so-called misery line—and thenceforth to privatisation.

Between 1986 and 1992, 1,157 carriages have been delivered to nine lines, and 890 are now on order to six lines. But not one single carriage has been delivered or is on order for the misery line, which is why it is a misery line. It needs two things: investment, and sound management. Privatisation would indubitably secure good management, but could only partially help to solve the investment problem.

I am grateful for the £30 million that the Government made available to the line for new signalling, which was secured by my Essex colleagues last year, but there is a need, before privatisation, to make available investment for trains to replace the ones that are on the line now which are unsafe, unrealiable and downright unacceptable. I unequivocally welcome the railways legislation and I call for the misery line to be a pilot for service franchising. Care must be taken to ensure that British Rail does not exercise anti-competitive control over timetabling. We must have a tough regulatory body—with teeth.

To expand this theme, let me add that it is a fact that local councils try to do too much. They are there to provide essential services, not to interfere or to run businesses, farms estates or airports—yet that is what some do, at great, although well disguised, public cost. I therefore come now to two small but important areas of privatisation: first, county farms estates. Their original purpose has long since evaporated in the sands of time; they are an anachronism. I ask the Secretary of State to consider introducing legislation to divest local authorities of all but the most strategically important land holdings. Farms, like any other business, and like council housing, are mostly better privately owned and managed than throttled in the hands of bureaucrats and councillors. Divestment would release funds and provide more efficient services for the people whom the councils serve.

Regional airports are another small but significant target for privatisation. In 1969, the then Board of Trade

[Dr. Robert Spink]

—now a revitalised title—disposed of some regional airports to local authorities. I ask the Secretary of State to privatise these assets, as a matter of urgency.

I welcome the fact that the Government have a coherent, integrated and achievable policy on privatisation generally. This will help the country through recovery, and to secure the success and prosperity in the 1990s that was enjoyed in the 1980s. In so far as privatisation is successful, and it is, it will help to secure national prosperity and thereby enable us better to care for the poor and the homeless.

I understand that it is traditional to say a word or two about oneself. I come from Keighley in west Yorkshire, a place where the weak die young and the strong envy them their fate. Like our honourable Speaker, I worked in the textile mills, as a mill boy, a labourer, so, like the distinguished lady, I have worked for my living and kept myself since leaving school, that is, until arriving in this House.

I do not wish to appear uncharitable, but I will take no lessons about the working class from those on the Opposition Benches and their friends, some of whom have never held down a real job in their lives. I was asked by one Opposition Member whether I was a real doctor. I had to answer, "No, I am just a mill boy made good, a time-served and subsequently educated engineer." That question shows how we as a nation value our various professions. Nevertheless, I advised the hon. Member, "If it's your varicose veins, you need not worry—I understand that David Owen is looking for a job."

I hope during my time in this House to take every opportunity to champion the manufacturing sector, and to champion education, which provides the ladder of opportunity on which ordinary folk may advance by their own efforts. I have taken my chances and it has been my good fortune of late to help manufacturing industry to become more vital and to thrive. I therefore well know that Britain must maintain a vibrant manufacturing sector. This is our added-value, our wealth generation backbone, the spine on which the softer service and professional sectors must develop and without which they could not thrive.

Like Jane in the jungle, the service industries are appealing and most valuable to us and to our economy, yet they remain ephemerally vulnerable. My right hon. Friend the Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) is there, dare I say it, like Tarzan was for Jane, and he will advance our manufacturing sector and thereby secure the economy as a whole. The opportunities are unfolding before our very eyes. Our interest rates, industrial relations and even our inflation rates are looking attractive internationally, as are our political stability and sound government—and the financial markets are responding accordingly. Our privatisation programme is aped around the world, to continue my somewhat dubious metaphor.

Like my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade, I will be busy. My constituency needs change to move smoothly towards the millenium. We need to create new jobs for Canvey and Benfleet, and perhaps an enterprise zone will be one of our considerations. We certainly need more further and higher education and training facilities—and a new railway line.

I wish finally to offer Opposition Members a little comfort at this time of no little confusion for them in their leadership contest. Four weeks ago they stood at the edge of a precipice, since when they have taken great strides forward. They should consider privatising their leadership selection process, bringing in a top-flight team of management consultants to advise them on the procedure, or even offering the job as a school project. That could hardly make their selection procedure any worse.

I end on a warm note, which I anticipate will unify the House. Perhaps this gracious and generous House will join me in hoping that we shall soon see Sir Bernard in a place not far from this Chamber in which he can continue to conduct his fight for human rights and against injustice across the world.

8.5 pm

Mr. Kevin Hughes (Doncaster, North): First, I congratulate you, Madam Deputy Speaker, on your election to a new office and thank you for allowing me to catch your eye so that I can make my maiden speech. I also congratulate the hon. Member for Castle Point (Dr. Spink) on his maiden speech, although I reserve the right to disagree with a great deal of its content.

It is a great honour and privilege to be elected to this House by the good people of Doncaster, North. I pay tribute to my predecessor, Mr. Michael Welsh, who was first elected in 1979 for the then Don Valley constituency, which is now so ably represented by my hon. Friend the Member for Don Valley (Mr. Redmond). Following the boundary changes in 1983 Mick was re-elected, for the then new seat of Doncaster, North. He served the people of my area well for the past 13 years. He is well known in the constituency and, as a kind and caring man, he has devoted most of his life to politics, having served not only in this House for 13 years but for many years on local authorities—first on Adwick urban district council and then, following the local government reorganisation in 1974, on Doncaster metropolitan borough council. I am sure that all hon. Members, especially his friends and colleagues on the Foreign Affairs Select Committee, will join me in wishing Mick and his wife Brenda a deserved and long and happy retirement.

My constituency covers a fairly large area. The people are mostly very friendly and caring. The constituency is mainly based around mining communities, agriculture and small townships in which there is a strong tradition of community spirit and friendliness, and I am proud to be their representative.

The proposed improvements in agricultural marketing outlined in the Gracious Speech will, I am sure, be welcomed by those of my constituents—there are many —who live and work in the agricultural community. Like me, many of my constituents will be bitterly disappointed, however, that the Gracious Speech does not mention unemployment, a problem facing far too many of my constituents who have to live with the daily trauma of neither having a job nor the prospect of finding one. There will be deep resentment at the fact that the Government propose no measures of help for them.

My elderly and disabled constituents and their carers look forward to the introduction of community care. If it is to facilitate their needs—and their needs are many—it must be properly funded by the Government. Caring for the elderly and disabled at home is not and should not be

a cheap option. I urge the new Secretary of State for Health to resolve as soon as possible with the local authorities the problem of funding so that they can confidently introduce their plans for the implementation of community care in 1993.

There is deep resentment and bitterness among many of my constituents at the proposed privatisation of the coal mines. Many were jubilant when the coal industry was nationalised in 1947. Men who gave their lives to the industry will be deeply saddened and its privatisation will be a bitter blow. My constituency used to have six pits but now there are only two. Many thousands have lost their jobs in mining and in connected industries in the past few years and they fear that privatisation will wipe out mining in Doncaster.

The men and their families at the two remaining pits, Bentley and Hatfield, are concerned for their future. They do not want to lose the prospects of future employment in the industry for the sake of political dogma. Some of my constituents already face joining the ever-growing number of unemployed following the surprise announcement two weeks ago by British Coal on closing the Markham Main colliery in Armthorpe in the constituency of my right hon. Friend the Member for Doncaster, Central (Mr. Walker).

The decision to close Markham Main was ruthless, vindictive and totally unnecessary. I sincerely hope that the new Minister will adopt a hands-on approach and will discuss the matter fully with the miners and their representatives who have worked in and for the mining industry for many years. I hope that he will treat them with the respect that they deserve and not rush headlong into an unnecessary mass closure and privatisation programme that will damage the livelihood of many of my constituents and their families. That would also sterilise one of the country's greatest assets, its massive coal reserves, and throw on the scrapheap our experienced and professional miners. It would be foolhardy and economic madness to close our mines and then import coal.

8.12 pm

Mr. Piers Merchant (Beckenham): I congratulate the hon. Member for Doncaster, North (Mr. Hughes) on his able and confident contribution to the debate. I hope that we shall frequently hear him again. I also congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Dr. Spink) on his eloquent, persuasive, forceful and humorous speech. I hope that he will be with us for as long as his predecessor.

Like my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, South (Mr. Ottaway) who spoke earlier, I cannot presume as a former Member to make a maiden speech, but I hope to be granted some indulgence and be allowed to make some relevant and illustrative points about my constituency. My constituents, who were ably represented by my talented predecessor Sir Philip Goodhart from 1957, would not otherwise benefit from the special praise granted to a maiden speech for more than 35 years and may well have to wait another 35 years. The House deserves some explanation for my silence over the past four years lest some hon. Members feel that I have been unduly lazy or, worse, at a loss for words.

The Government propose paving measures for two privatisations. The ultimate privatisation is that of British Coal, and I thoroughly and whole-heartedly support that proposal. I describe it as ultimate because that industry's nationalisation was the flag carrier for Labour's clause IV. It was to pave the way and be the one on which the others were modelled. At the time and for many years after it seemed irreversible. Denationalising coal shows that the tide of post-war socialism has not just been turned but that the red sea has dried up altogether.

Coal privatisation is relatively straightforward and is the simpler of the two proposals. British Rail's privatisation poses a more difficult challenge, which is why the Government are right to approach it with some caution. Apart from other complexities, it causes most concern to ordinary people because they place a heavy everyday reliance on it. That is especially true for the people of Beckenham. My constituency boasts no fewer than 12 railway stations and there are 10 more within a short distance of its boundaries, although the constituency measures only four miles by two miles.

I would like to claim that the railways came to Beckenham because the good people there had such a good reputation that the railway companies were eager to serve them. Alas, that would not be true. People came to Beckenham because the private railways were already there and the small villages of that time were within easy striking distance of workplaces in the metropolis. Whether people would have moved to Beckenham if the rail service had been as it is today is a matter for conjecture. They would probably not have built their houses near the track if they had known that it would later be misused for channel tunnel international trains. Perhaps they would not have chosen to commute if the conditions and pressures had been as they now are under nationalisation. What better evidence can I present than the words of Sir Philip Goodhart who said in February last year:

> "Normally the service from so many parts of my constituency to the centre of London is, to put it mildly, bad, but in the past five days it has too often been non-existent. It would be difficult to exaggerate the rage which so many commuters in my constituency feel about the way in which British Rail has tried to cope."—[*Official Report*, 12 February, 1991; Vol. 185, c. 793.]

Sir Philip was well known to many hon. Members for his charm, wit and enthusiasm. In his constituency he was respected for his wisdom and his work in representing the people and their concerns. Sir Philip was an expert on Committee procedure in this place and wrote a book about that and another about referenda. His interest in those subjects and his care for his constituents continued until his retirement and I owe him a debt of gratitude for his constant support.

Despite the tribulations, about 15,000 people commute each day from Beckenham, mostly by rail. Even if they are not British Rail commuters they cannot ignore BR's omnipresence. At least 5,000 people live close to the tracks or stations and almost double that number are within earshot. I am speaking about the leafy middle class suburbs of Beckenham, an area which has been able to resist the encroaching pressures of inner London and retain sufficient of its character and its past to justify those who refer to it as "the village". That is why it is considered so desirable an area for those who need to commute, even by BR.

Beckenham's choice of housing, shopping and other facilities is broad and excellent, but there is virtually no choice for the consumer because there is a monopoly supplier—a state monopoly, inflexible, unaccountable and unpersuadable. The tube system does not extend to the area—that should be corrected—and the roads are slow and choked and cannot handle the volume of traffic. The

[Mr. Piers Merchant]

Fees Office offered me air vouchers, but 14 miles from my constituency to central London does not make that an attractive option unless, of course, one owns a helicopter. I understand that one of my constituents has one. Privatisation offers the prospect of transforming the quality of transport for constituencies such as mine. It would not be an exaggeration to say that, if handled right, it would also transform people's everyday lives.

There is a mismatch between consumer expectation and the provider's service. Industry after industry has illustrated that private operation can overcome this obstacle which nationalisation created. A system of regulated franchising would provide the competition and accountability that fails to permeate the labyrinthine structures of a monopoly bureaucracy such as British Rail. The beauty of franchising is that it can introduce a form of competition, or of privatisation, even where there is a so-called natural monopoly. Making an operator bid for the franchise at once exercises a competitive pressure that a provider might otherwise escape, be he private or public. Requiring the franchisee to repeat the bid at regular intervals maintains and enhances that pressure.

Franchising does not just benefit the consumer by providing a form of competition, which itself enhances efficiency and maximises resource use, thus giving the customer better quality and prices. It also enables certain fixed standards of quality to be provided. Alongside the citizens charter is the franchise contract, with inbuilt requirements of service delivery—reliability, regularity and cleanliness, for example. Therefore, it brings three separate pressures to perform—competition, the contract and the charter.

These benefits will operate anywhere on Britain's rail system, but an additional element could operate in Beckenham and other areas that are similarly well-endowed with track—the possibility of direct competition.

One of the factors that makes Beckenham so attractive is its accessibility. It is possible to travel to London by rail by at least seven routes. Even British Rail identifies three different line systems—Kentlink, South London and Thameslink. In the far west, the constituency is dominated by the giant Crystal Palace tower, right on the boundary. Nearby are five rail stations, giving travellers a choice of five routes, some to the same and some to different London termini. In the middle of the constituency, five more stations offer three services and in the east three further stations offer two services. In every case, there is a choice, and therefore, in every case, there is the possibility of some, perhaps limited, competition.

Sometimes one route is quicker or more convenient than another, but often the difference is only marginal. The prospect of real competition exists, and if some of the different lines were run by different franchisees, that would become a reality. I hope that, as the franchise details are worked out, my right hon. Friend will try to avoid franchising whole sets of lines and will encourage the sort of competition that I have outlined.

Competition is a more effective way to bring back real accountability to ordinary people than any other system I know. With that will come enhanced standards, greater efficiency, better value for money. The beauty of this proposed privatisation is that it will retain the commitment to huge public infrastructure investment, higher than for 30 years, and leave BR with a role, but at the same time introduce privatisation.

8.22 pm

Ms. Glenda Jackson (Hampstead and Highgate): I thank you for calling me, Madam Deputy Speaker, and I add my congratulations to those that have been offered by those who have spoken before me.

I pay tribute not only to my predecessor, Sir Geoffrey Finsberg, but to his predecessor, Ben Whitaker, who represented my constituency and my party from 1966 to 1970. I mean to emulate his dedication, if not his length of stay in the House. I have never had the pleasure of meeting Sir Geoffrey Finsberg, but he served my constituency well for more than 20 years, and I know that my constituents would wish me to extend their thanks to him, and best wishes to Sir Geoffrey and Lady Finsberg for a long and happy retirement.

My constituency has long exercised a particular fascination for the creative spirit. Many of the greatest artists, writers, musicians and philosphers that not only this country has produced but that the world has ever seen have chosen to make their homes there. My constituency has been blessed with great natural beauties, the glorious expanse of Hampstead heath being but one. The Vale of Health was so named because it was rumoured that the springs that rose there contained mystical power—a rumour somewhat belied by its proximity to that other famous landmark, Highgate cemetery.

There is a popular myth regarding my constituency, one much loved by the press, of a leafy suburb populated solely by millionaires whose only drink is champagne and whose only conversational exchange could be deemed to be chatter. The facts make a rather different picture. The largest single group in my constituency consists of pensioners, and the largest group within that group consists of those on some form of social benefit. This month, 5,000 of my constituents are unemployed. In the borough of which my constituency is part, 1,000 families have no home of their own. The Royal Free hospital, much loved by my constituents, which was, against their wishes, made into a trust, has announced waiting lists for in-patients running at 2,500.

The Prime Minister has spoken of his wish to provide ladders of opportunity for our people. However, a ladder can be a dangerous place if it is not rooted on a solid foundation and leaning against an equally solid wall. If it is dangerous for the most able bodied among us, how much more dangerous is it for the very old and the very young, the frail and the disabled? My constituents welcome the idea of greater opportunities being provided, but the opportunities must be available to all our people and they must be based on the solid building blocks of education, training, health care free at the point of delivery and, perhaps most important of all, decent affordable housing.

What rung of the Prime Minister's ladder will be earmarked for one of my constituents who has been unemployed for five long years? On what rung will be my elderly constituent who has been paralysed from the waist down with her arms and hands crippled with arthritis, who has now been denied bathing facilities in her own home because it has been decreed that such a facility will be provided on medical, not social, grounds? What part of

that ladder has been earmarked for the young homeless who have no bed but the pavement, the doorway? What about the families who live for month after month in bed-and-breakfast accommodation?

Some in the private rented sector are suffering harassment and sometimes even violence at the hands of greedy, unscrupulous landlords. Surely the Government must acknowledge that it is time to release capital grants so that a programme of rebuild and repair can begin, and that more effort must be made to relieve the enormous burden that so many councils are having to carry, faced, particularly in London, with the continually rising tide of homelessness.

My constituents have always been concerned with the pursuit and obtaining of social justice, not only at home but abroad. My constituents are particularly concerned about the position of the third world. They ask why it is that in 1979 this country was the second largest donor nation of the G7 countries but that this year it is the second smallest. They acknowledge, as do I and my party, that aid alone cannot relieve the almost unbelievable burdens facing the people of the third world, but our country could do more than it is doing, and the aid that we supply could be more efficiently targeted on the poorest countries and the poorest groups within those countries. Our aid should be targeted on the basic requirements of health care—children are dying in their millions—and on providing clean water.

Another particular concern arising from the Gracious Speech, on which I believe that I shall be joining hands with my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Ms. Jackson), is the Government's promise to reintroduce the Asylum Bill. Many of my constituents came to this country as refugees. They were fleeing the appalling political and religious oppression that existed both before and after the second world war. Within my constituency they found sanctuary, a great welcome and the possibility to create for themselves and their family a future. It would be a tragedy if our nation's reputation for always taking in those suffering from persecution should be lost.

It is a great privilege for any person to be called to the House as a Member. It is a particular privilege for me to represent the people of Hampstead and Highgate. I am grateful and deeply proud that I represent them.

8.30 pm

Mr. David Nicholson (Taunton): It is a particular pleasure to be able to congratulate the hon. Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Ms. Jackson) on her excellent maiden speech. Of all the new Members, she arrived in the House as the one perhaps best known outside it. We look forward to the contribution that she will make to our proceedings. As one who for some years lived within about 100 yds of Highgate cemetery, may I say that we are especially grateful to the hon. Lady for the tribute that she paid to Sir Geoffrey Finsberg, whom we remember with affection.

I congratulate you, Madam Deputy Speaker, and the other three new occupants of the Chair who will be with us during this Parliament. I congratulate also the many other hon. Members who have made their maiden speeches during today's debate. I shall single out one by referring to my next-door neighbour, the hon. Member for Devon, North (Mr. Harvey). Again, we are grateful to him for the tribute that he paid to his predecessor, Tony Speller, whom we remember with affection.

Along with many of my right hon. and hon. Friends, I wish to congratulate my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on his success against the indications of opinion polls and almost against the odds of winning a fourth term for the Conservative party in extremely difficult circumstances, including a recession, the backlog of the community charge and several other issues that had upset Conservative voters. Our victory was in large part a tribute to the high esteem for my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, which I believe extended to many thousands of those who nevertheless voted Liberal or Labour in the general election a month ago.

Another factor that helped to bring about that victory was great suspicion of the Labour party. The rather rambling speech of the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) this afternoon will have confirmed electors in that suspicion. I recall the classical villain, I think it was, whose fate in Hades was to push a large stone to the top of a hill. When he had got it to the top, it used to roll down to the bottom. I think of the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) and perhaps the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) as those who push the stone to the top of the hill. As soon as they get it there, the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East pops out and pushes it down to the bottom of the hill. I fear that that will be the state of the Labour party in the coming months and, perhaps, throughout this Parliament.

Turning to British Rail, I welcome the various comments by my hon. Friends that suggest that there must be better ways of running a railway. I listened with great interest, however, to my hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley), and I echo many of his warnings. I begin a critique of British Rail by recalling a remark made by my hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Mr. Spring), who in his maiden speech said "the engine started smoking". As an occasional smoker, I express regret that British Rail should now be trying to prevent even a minority of passengers from smoking. I hope that there will be opportunities to take up this matter in coming weeks.

Another small matter is my regret that the late-night train from Paddington was stopped some months ago from halting at Taunton. This has been an inconvenience to some of my constituents and a subject of correspondence in the local press.

An important matter for my constituency—it is typical of one of the weaknesses of British Rail—is the handling of freight. As a major environmental objective, we should be aiming to transfer as much freight as possible from road to rail, especially with the coming of the channel tunnel. I must report of Taunton Cider, an important employer in my constituency.—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. I am aware that sometimes Members have occasion to speak one to another, but when I become aware of a ripple of conversation I think that it is too much.

Mr. Nicholson: I am grateful for your protection, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Until recently, a firm called Tiger Rail was able to provide a freight service on three days a week to Taunton

[Mr. Nicholson]

Cider. I regret to say that that firm rapidly went bankrupt. I believe that British Rail has been helpful and now provides a service one day a week on Saturdays for freight. That service will run until August. That is satisfactory in the winter months, but I am told by Taunton Cider that it will not be satisfactory in the summer months, when stocks in many parts of the country are running low. It needs a freight service every day.

Before Tiger Rail took on this task, there was Speedlink. We know what happened to that. Taunton Cider and many other freight operators with British Rail have been messed around over the years by changes, transfers and withdrawals of service. At present, there is a possibility that a firm called Charter Rail will be able to provide the service that Taunton Cider needs, but this will require a different technical system and there will be more trailers to go with the wagons. I fear that this will once again cause frustration. I hope that the pressures of privatisation on some of BR's services will give a service to firms in my constituency and, I hope, to many others that look forward to using the channel tunnel that will be much better than that which they have had in recent years.

I move on to two other subjects that are slightly without the immediate scope of privatisation although they concern important public services which, I believe, will remain firmly within the public sector. I hope that they will be subject to progress under the citizens charter, for which my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster has responsibility.

The first of the two subjects is law and order, and one that played a greater part in the recent election campaign than many of us would have wished. Unfortunately, I do not believe that we are making the progress in dealing with criminality that we would wish. Given certain reports in the weekend press, I urge my right hon. and hon. Friends to take care when making criticisms of and considering plans to reform the police. Part of the blame for our failure as a society effectively to combat crime lies with the machinery of justice, the Crown Prosecution Service and the consequences of certain well-intentioned legislation on police methods that the House has enacted in recent years.

We have greatly increased resources and manpower for the police service. Unfortunately, the numbers of criminals and crimes have increased still faster. I hope that there will be speedy implementation of the proposals that were made in the previous Parliament in respect of offences committed while defendants are on bail for which the Avon and Somerset constabulary pressed. I hope to return to the subject of the distribution of police resources. In Avon and Somerset there is a heavy concentration of police resources on Bristol because of its known level of criminality. I fear that therefore certain parts of my constituency, including rural areas, are not policed as effectively as we would wish.

My second point concerns an important public service that should have been debated more effectively during the recent general election—education. Again, I urge my right hon. and hon. Friends to beware of concentrating debate on institutional change. I would need to be convinced case by case of the advantages of grant-maintained status for schools in my constituency. The real issue in schools—and this will remain so whether or not there is grant-maintained status, especially with local management of schools—is not whether the Secretary of State or Somerset education authority runs the schools, but what is taught, by what methods, and the quality and morale of teachers and the resources, books and equipment available.

In the limited time available to me, I have taken the opportunity to welcome the various measures promised in the Queen's Speech, but also to echo certain warnings. Our success in the recent general election should not blind us to the considerable concern and upset that we have caused in recent years among our supporters. We should be thankful that they rallied to our support on 9 April.

8.40 pm

Mr. Paddy Tipping (Sherwood): I congratulate you, Madam Deputy Speaker, on your appointment.

Hon. Members will know of Sherwood forest, its myths and its legends. People from Nottinghamshire, especially from the tourist industry, try to persuade people that all the tales are undoubtedly true. In contrast, the constituency of Sherwood is a far newer creation, having been formed in 1983. Its first Member of Parliament was Andy Stewart, who at one time was a colleague of mine. I pay tribute to him. Throughout the constituency he is known as a nice man. Indeed, so often have I heard it said that he is a nice man—a very, very nice man—that I think the AA advertisement must have been inspired by him. Andy and his wife Louise have helped many people in the Sherwood constituency who want their thanks put on the record.

I wish also to mention my old friend Frank Haynes, who at one time represented part of the constituency. He, too, is highly regarded locally. Rumour has it that Frank is to become a boxing commentator. I assume that in these tough times the broadcasters are trying to save microfilm expenditure.

Both Frank and Andy took an interest in the coal industry. Sherwood remains the largest mining constituency in the country, with six collieries, a workshop and the group headquarters. In his maiden speech in November 1983, my predecessor, Andy Stewart, said:

> "It is my view that our coal industry has a great future."
> —[*Official Report*, 15 November 1983; Vol. 48, c. 748.]

To put it mildly, his views were over-optimistic. In 1980, about 40,000 people worked in the coal industry in Nottinghamshire; today the figure is about 12,000. In just over a decade, two out of three mining jobs in the county have gone. Unemployment has increased—in the two years to March 1992 it rose by 62 per cent. Bankruptcies are still increasing and are at an all-time high. In Nottinghamshire in March, 6,513 young people aged 16 to 19 were seeking permanent employment. At that time there were only 22 vacancies in the careers office, so almost 300 youngsters were chasing every job. That is a waste of hope, of talent and of imagination.

Worse is to come. The Government's firm intention to privatise the coal industry has caused alarm and despondency in north Nottinghamshire. By itself, the plan to privatise the coal industry is an empty and hollow prospect. The key issue now facing the industry is the negotiations with the generators PowerGen and National Power. Some 80 per cent. of Nottinghamshire's coal goes direct to power stations. It is the volume and the price of coal supplied to the generators that will decide the fate of the mining industry in Nottinghamshire.

For their part, the generators have made it clear that they want a small and short-life contract. This year, British

Coal is supplying 65 million tonnes to the generators, but there is speculation that the generators want a future contract with as little as 25 million tonnes over a contract period of only three years. If that were to happen, the coal industry both in Nottinghamshire and throughout the country would be decimated even further and there would be nothing left to privatise.

The Government should intervene quickly in the discussions between the generators and British Coal. The new Secretary of State for Trade and Industry has a reputation for being an interventionist. Some 40 per cent. of PowerGen and National Power still remains in the public interest. As the largest shareholder, the Government should insist on the high-volume, long-term contracts. A contract of 55 million tonnes a year would still mean job losses in the industry. I note that the electricity companies are signing 15-year contracts for gas-generated electricity. Why cannot there be parity for the coal industry?

Miners in Nottinghamshire and throughout the country have made enormous productivity gains under public control. Why discard them now? We have the most efficient deep coal mining industry in Europe. Last year, six of the Nottinghamshire group's 15 pits produced more than 1 million tonnes of coal, all of them setting new productivity records. British Coal has made a substantial operating profit in Nottinghamshire this year. Some 17·2 million tonnes were produced, with 5·6 tonnes per man shift. There has been a 64 per cent. improvement in productivity since 1985 under public control.

In 1985, British Coal in Nottinghamshire sold coal at £42·60 per tonne. This year, the price is only £42·93 per tonne. Over the same period, electricity prices have risen by more than 45 per cent. Nottinghamshire coal is being produced at half the cost of that in Germany. No other industrial sector can match that record, yet the Government's policy is to close down the coal industry. It is no wonder that all over Europe people think the policy is crazy.

This morning, Nottinghamshire county council called for an early meeting with the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry to discuss the future. Tomorrow, the North Nottinghamshire training and enterprise council, a private sector dominated body, will call for the halting of pit closures in the region because of the devastating effect on the local economy. On Wednesday, the new Energy Minister will visit the Nottinghamshire coalfield for the first time. He should listen carefully to the voices of local councils, the TEC, the private sector and the trade unions in the industry, which, without exception, are pledged to fight privatisation.

Present policies towards the coal industry will devastate it and the local communities that surround it. The Government and the Energy Minister will have few friends if they continue with those policies. On his visit, the Minister should take note of a few signposts. He could work towards a national energy policy, in which coal is given the same consideration as nuclear power. He could bring discussions on the new contract to a quick and satisfactory solution. He could keep the lid on the amount of gas-generated electricity produced. He should use the powers under the planning system to stop new gas-powered generators.

At a time of potential energy surplus, the Minister should stop opencasting. It is obscene. It tears up hedges, trees and acres of fields, even though there is plenty of coal and other sources of fuel around. I implore the Government to listen to the voices of local people on this issue because they will not win environmental and planning support.

The Minister should keep open the discussions with our European partners about the plan for a European reference price on coal. He should ensure that commitments made on gas scrubbing equipment are honoured. He should make more resources available to assist economic regeneration in coalfield areas. He should build on the partnerships that exist there and bring new jobs, new investment and new prosperity to those areas.

Despite all the promises that have been made, the European RECHAR money has yet to be announced. The Department of the Environment's regional office has no idea of the transitional arrangement for the current financial year, or of how the £13 million earmarked for Nottinghamshire is to be unlocked. The Minister would do well to view those signposts on Wednesday.

The Minister will be surprised at the youth of Nottinghamshire miners, whose average age is 34. The miner's future and that of his family and community depends on the coal industry. The Government can take action to safeguard their futures. The Government should take careful note of the partnerships that exist in Nottinghamshire, and not be driven by the dogma behind some of the speeches that have been heard in the Chamber today.

8.50 pm

Mr. Barry Field (Isle of Wight): I congratulate you, Madam Deputy Speaker, on your appointment and the hon. Member for Sherwood (Mr. Tipping) on his maiden speech. I also thank him for his generous remarks about his predecessor, Mr. Andy Stewart. If the hon. Gentleman manages to gain his predecessor's reputation as a most agreeable and approachable Member of Parliament, the hon. Gentleman will do himself no harm.

I cannot follow the hon. Member for Sherwood in his remarks, because I believe that Nottingham's coalfields face a bright future under privatisation. They are among the most productive in the country. Many years ago, I visited a Nottinghamshire coal mine with my middle brother, and I was thoroughly impressed with its modern equipment and the productivity that it achieved.

No contribution of mine to the Loyal Address would be complete without mentioning the pleasure that is felt by all my constituents, of all parties and of none, at the appointment of my noble Friend Lord Mottistone as the Isle of Wight's new governor. The 1992 general election campaign will go into my family scrapbook as one of governorships.

In a unique constituency such as the Isle of Wight, there could be no greater claim to fame than that it is the only part of the United Kingdom to have a governor. Lord Mottistone's family have given distinguished service to the island for many years, and I know that his appointment is universally acclaimed.

The Isle of Wight's other unique claim is that it is the largest constituency to be represented in the House. I welcome the promise made in the Gracious Speech of legislation to speed up regular reviews of parliamentary boundaries. We hope that later in the lifetime of this Parliament, following the local government commissioner's review of the island's structure, the Isle of Wight

[Mr. Barry Field]

will have a unitary authority. It would be nonsensical to see a decrease in the number of councils and councillors, which currently total three and 100 respectively, and an increase in the number of its Members of Parliament, when they might not agree with one another. However, regular reviews in future will prove useful.

When my hon. Friend the Member for Hampshire, North-West (Sir D. Mitchell) was a Minister in the Ministry of Transport—and what a proud dad he must have been when his son so ably seconded the motion on the Loyal Address last Wednesday—he assisted me in furthering my efforts to bring about the privatisation of British Rail's assets on the Isle of Wight. I read with great interest this week that Richard Branson is holding discussions with Mr. Chris Green, British Rail's InterCity manager, because it was the same Mr. Green who set back our plans for the sale of BR's Isle of Wight assets.

The line in question runs from the end of Ryde pier to Shanklin, using 1940 ex-London Transport tube trains. Announcing that British Rail had no intention of selling its assets in the Isle of Wight, Mr. Green said that the island's railway line was

"a necessary and integral part of Network SouthEast."

With that quality of senior management running British Rail, one might imagine that it could not run a brothel in a garrison town—and that were it to do so, it would probably make a loss. If Mr. Chris Green were in charge, all the passengers would have to stand for the whole of their journey.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hampshire, North-West and I were sad that we were unable to bring about progress on the sale of BR's assets, but my hon. Friend the Minister for Public Transport has been of great assistance in pursuing that objective.

A number of issues will come out of the privatisation of British Rail and its assets. Why is it that taxi drivers on the Isle of Wight must pay a considerable sum for the use of British Rail's station forecourts, when their London counterparts pay nothing at all? I asked the present British Rail chairman why it was necessary to use uniformed railwaymen to run left luggage offices. Surely it does not take highly trained railway personnel to run that facility and to guard passengers' suitcases.

As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland is to wind up this debate, I cannot resist the opportunity to draw attention to the island's ferries. A Monopolies and Mergers Commission inquiry just before the general election concluded that the island's ferry crossings are the most expensive in the world—and there have been further price increases since that report was published. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport has said that the Director General of Fair Trading will review that matter in three years' time.

I remind my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland that the MMC identified a definite correlation between the quality and price of a service and increased competition. The existing ferry companies operate from the best harbours and routes. If further harbours and other facilities for ferries are to be established to allow greater competition, we must ensure that the Isle of Wight is included in the new assisted areas map when it is redrawn. My right hon. Friend the Minister for Industry has promised me that the island's case will be carefully considered. Only with that kind of finance can the island hope to establish the additional facilities that will provide increased competition across the Solent.

When I was young, the debate in our nation concerned whether one had been educated privately or publicly. I have long subscribed to the view that the chasm that goes to the core of the nation now divides the privately employed and the publicly employed. One of the sad features of the election debate was the accusation that we had not looked after public servants. The civil servants in my constituency, however, occupy some of the best office accommodation on the Isle of Wight: many employees in private industry and commerce would like similar accommodation.

I believe that one of the challenges that face my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister is the requirement to ensure, through the citizens charter, much greater cross-fertilisation between the two sectors. I look forward to the day when I learn, by means of a parliamentary question in the House, that more than 50 per cent. of the First Division Association have industrial or commercial experience. The "teachers in industry" project has been one of the great success stories in education. Initially, academia was sceptical; but, as the word went around the staff rooms, teachers became increasingly enthusiastic about getting out and getting a taste of industry.

I hope that, in the future, our civil servants will regularly go off to work in industry, and will then return. I also hope that the private sector will come into the civil service and then go out again. Currently, pension arrangements and terms of engagement make that almost impossible. That, I think, is the real challenge that will face my right hon. Friend until the turn of the century.

On 9 April, my right hon. Friend attained a notable victory. To be pitchforked into that high office just 18 months before an election would have been an achievement in itself. The achievement of a fourth and historic victory was quite a mountain to climb, and to do that in contradiction of the opinion polls constituted a remarkable personal achievement. But to fight the election during the deepest recession that the nation has seen for more than 60 years was a particularly remarkable personal achievement. Not for nothing will my right hon. Friend become known in the hearts and minds of our people as "Honest John".

9 pm

Mr. Alan Milburn (Darlington): It is with a great sense of pride that I rise to make my maiden speech—in, appropriately enough, a debate about the future of British Rail. As hon. Members will know, the railways and the town of Darlington, which I am proud to represent, are virtually synonymous. Darlington, however, has another reputation, of which hon. Members are probably aware: its reputation as a barometer marginal seat.

It is my pleasure to say a word or two about my predecessors. My immediate predecessor, Michael Fallon, was a man of impeccably right-wing views. Indeed, he remained a devoted follower of Mrs. Thatcher even when that fell somewhat out of fashion on the Conservative Benches. He was, none the less, a hard-working Member of Parliament who rose to junior ministerial rank, and I wish him well in his new career outside Parliament.

I also pay tribute to my two immediate Labour predecessors, Ossie O'Brien and Ted Fletcher. Ossie had

the misfortune to serve in the House for only six weeks after his splendid victory in the 1983 by-election; Ted, by contrast, sat for nearly 19 years, often bucking the national trend by dint of his diligence and personal popularity in the town of Darlington. Like those hon. Members, I will always put Darlington's interests first, and will do my utmost to maintain their record of service to the town's residents.

As hon. Members will know, Darlington gave birth to the railways, and so helped to spawn the first industrial revolution. Happily, that spirit of engineering enterprise and skill remains alive today in the string of top international companies for which Darlington is home: Cummins, Bowaters, Torringtons, Rothmans, and Cleveland Structural Engineering, to name but a few. One of those companies, Cleveland Structural Engineering, beat off international competition last week to win the contract to build the Tsing Ma bridge in Hong Kong. The bridge will be the largest structure of its kind in the world, and, like the Sydney harbour bridge, the Tyne bridge and the Humber bridge, it will be built in my constituency. I hope that hon. Members on both sides of the House will join me in congratulating both the work force and the management of CSE on their well-earned success. Whenever I have visited the Yarm road factory, I have been immensely impressed by the skills and commitment that I have seen there; now, they have obtained their just reward.

Although I am delighted by Cleveland's success, after hearing the Gracious Speech I am less optimistic about the future for British industry as a whole. The speech was virtually silent about the economy, which remains in such dire straits. That the word "unemployment" did not even earn a mention is an insult to the 4,740 people in the Darlington district who remain without work. The recession has already cost 1,300 manufacturing jobs in my constituency, but all the major forecasts suggest that unemployment is set to go on rising.

Last year's record fall in industrial investment risks plunging the country into a repeat of the economic mistakes of the mid-1980s—capacity failing to meet demand, thus forcing up imports and prices and leading inevitably to a Government-engineered slowdown. Companies such as CSE deserve better than that. They should be able to rely on the same support as is available to their foreign competitors from their home Governments: measures to stimulate investment in training, transport and technology. Yet here, in the middle of the longest recession since the war, we have the spectacle of the Durham training and enterprise council being forced to cut adult training by more than 20 per cent. in Darlington because its budget has been squeezed dry once again. It is a scandal that those offering youth training will have to provide more for less. Funding for non-endorsed training weeks has fallen from £31 to £28. What was training on the cheap is rapidly becoming training for a pittance.

These cheap and nasty cuts are pouring Darlington's future down the drain. I fear that, without a change in policy, Darlington's very real potential for economic take-off will be grounded, even before it has started. That would be a tragedy because, as Cleveland's success amply shows, we have much to be proud of in the town of Darlington. The town is ideally placed to be at the core of a new industrial revolution that will bring more high-quality, high-skilled, high-tech, and high-paid employment.

Darlington's fortunes, however, depend upon the Government removing the ideological blinkers that so restrict their vision and rethinking their hostility to manufacturing and their indifference to the north. The Government's preoccupation with the privatisation of the railways is, classically, a triumph of ideological hope over the experience of those countries who owe their fast, efficient and safe railway systems to Government policies on planning and investment. The dictum that the market, and nothing but the market, can bring prosperity to areas like the north has proved disastrously wrong. After 13 years, unemployment is higher, the number of people in work lower and the gap between the rich and the poor ever wider.

Last week I listened with great interest to the Prime Minister's promise to open up the powers of Government to public scrutiny. I hope that he will go one stage further and devolve power out from Whitehall to the regions and nations of our land. If the Prime Minister is serious about breaking down concentrations of unaccountable power, he will begin by reversing that process of creeping centralisation that has so characterised Conservative party policies since 1979. The north not only needs restoration of regional policy and proper investment in our transport infrastructure to allow us to compete against better placed regions and nations at the core of the single European market, but we need the right to determine our own future through a new structure of regional government that will take power from the centre.

Any process of devolution should include giving towns such as Darlington the right to run all their own services. In 1974, Darlington lost its county borough status because of the last Conservative reorganisation of local government. Ministers now have an oppportunity to put matters right by returning to the people of Darlington the powers that are rightfully theirs. I am looking not for any special favours for Darlington, but for policies that will rightly reward the vigour, loyalty and skill of its people. Too many of my constituents have paid the price for the records that the Government have set in the town in recent years—record bankruptcies, record mortgage repossessions and record hospital waiting lists.

I fear that the policies in the Gracious Speech mean yet more of the same. Darlington deserves a new spirit that forsakes the short term, the quick fix, the "me at the expense of the rest"—a spirit that says that all of us rely on common services because we are all part of the same community.

For those of us who grew up in the north-east, the past few years have seen a loss of that sense of community which used to characterise life there. When the Conservative party declared that there was no such thing as society, it acknowledged that, by its policies, people had been cut adrift from their communities, and as community has been denied so hope has been smothered. Hope can return to the communities of the north-east, but it needs policies that put talents to use rather than allow them to go to waste; policies that will reduce crime by putting sufficient police officers on our streets. It means policies that will restore pride by cleaning up our environment. It means tackling the obscenity of homelessness and investing in our hospitals and schools. It means, above all, giving regions such as the north-east and towns such as

[Mr. Alan Milburn]

Darlington the chance to compete. It will be my privilige to fight for those policies in the House, I hope for many years to come. I shall do so in order to benefit the whole community of Darlington.

9.11 pm

Ms. Angela Eagle (Wallasey): Following overseas development questions earlier today, I must be the only Opposition Member who is quite pleased that the Minister for Overseas Development is in the other place.

Any new hon. Member rising to make their first speech in the Chamber cannot help but be aware of the history and tradition that reside in it. Traditionally, a maiden speech is non-controversial, praising one's predecessor and describing the constituency, yet some distinguished hon. Members, past and present, have maintained a tradition of rabble-rousing and controversy. Indeed, we have heard some speeches like that this evening.

Which tradition should I follow? I believe that no tradition deserves to be honoured for its own sake but only for its intrinsic merit and relevance to modern-day conditions. We must move with the times if we are not to atrophy into some quaint but irrelevant sideshow, fit only for tourists to admire.

In a real sense, the fact that I am here tonight is a most welcome break with tradition, because it is my privilege to be the first Labour Member for Wallasey—an honour for which I thank the voters of the constituency and those who worked so hard on my behalf. I believe that I can say with some feeling, as Shakespeare wrote, that some traditions are

"More honour'd in the breach than the observance."

It is not my intention, however, to break with the tradition of paying tribute to my predecessor, the noble Baroness Chalker. She was a formidable opponent, and I know that she was a popular and well-respected Member of the House—and deservedly so. She served Wallasey well for 18 years. I recall that she was the first Member of Parliament whom I questioned when I attended a meeting of the Hansard Society as an enthusiastic 14-year-old schoolgirl. I remember asking her a question about the future of the other place, which specifically related to its possible evolution as a democratic chamber. She gave me a response that I could not agree with then and I still do not agree with now, but as long as the other place remains in its present form I am certain that she will make a worthy contribution to its deliberations and I wish her well.

The constituency of Wallasey is located across the Mersey from Liverpool in the north-east of the Wirral peninsula. The derivation of the name most generally accepted is that it means "Island of the Welshmen". The pre-Doomsday history appears to show that the area was used by Celts sheltering from avaricious Saxon raiders. Thus Wallasey can, I believe, rightly express its solidarity with the endeavours of its Celtic descendants in Scotland and Wales who must, in the aftermath of the general election, engage once more in a similar activity.

Wallasey is a place of constrasts encompassing residential areas, derelict docklands, council estates and a seaside resort. The years of Conservative rule have hit Wallasey hard. Not only have two recessions in a decade decimated the basic manufacturing industries on which the prosperity of the area was founded—especially the shipbuiding industry—but the continuing recession is threatening what is left. As a result, unemployment in the area is a chronic problem which affects nearly one in five of the working population if one counts those who are left out of the reckoning by the statistical redefinitions of unemployment so loved by the Government.

It is not unusual for me to meet constituents who have been jobless for 10 or 11 years, but the Gracious Speech —as has been pointed out many times today—made no mention of that problem. Any decent humanitarian Government would develop a strategy to deal with it and I implore the Conservatives to do so. Worthy attempts are being made by Wirral council and the local chamber of commerce to attract new business to the area, but their efforts have been undermined by the recent decision to raise the tolls on the Mersey tunnels to unacceptably high levels. That has hit commuters and businesses and is acting as a brake on any possible economic revival.

My hon. Friend the Member for Newport, East (Mr. Hughes) recently initiated an Adjournment debate on the increase in the Severn bridge tolls. There is a similar problem with the Mersey tunnels about which my constituents feel very strongly. It is high time that the Treasury did something about the injustice of tolls and the unfair penalties currently meted out to those living in areas where the local authorities were far-sighted enough to build essential river crossings—whether bridges or tunnels —long before the Department of Transport got around to it.

I welcome the commitment in the Gracious Speech to combat the trafficking and misuse of drugs as there is, unfortunately, a growing drug problem in the Wirral. It is not only a personal tragedy for the victims of this scourge but it contributes to the rising rate of violent crime and causes much needless fear and misery. We must recognise the extent to which poverty and deprivation help to fuel such problems. It cannot be right to create a two-tier society which excludes significant numbers of people from the advantages that many others take for granted and then to expect that social problems will not emerge as a result.

It will not surprise Conservative Members if I say that there are many aspects of the Gracious Speech with which I cannot agree. Of its proposals, the attempt to privatise British Rail and British Coal are among the most objectionable. Other hon. Members have spoken in more detail about their objections to those proposals and I intend to confine myself to a few comments about the principle of privatisation itself. I see little merit in it. Indeed, I believe it is driven by the ideological obsessions of the Conservatives and lacks a firm empirical or theoretical justification.

One link that it is important to pinpoint is that between privatisation and redundancy. Another discernible link is that between privatisation and the seemingly inexorable rise of chairmen's salaries. For example, British Gas had 104,000 employees in 1980 but only 81,000 10 years later. Meanwhile, the chairman's salary had increased from £109,000—almost £1 for every employee—in the year of privatisation to £370,000 last year. It is safe to say that that has been an above-inflation increase. I think that many users will also have noticed the increased efficiency in sending final demands and cutting off the supply which the privatisation of the utility has brought in its wake. The primacy of profitability over all other concerns in privatised industries often means that social obligations come a long way down the list. There is a great deal of

nonsense in the current dogma on the Conservative Benches that private is somehow good and public is bad. These proposals are based on that false premise and to that extent they are undesirable and wrong.

The Prime Minister said in his post-election speech that he intended to be a Prime Minister for all the people, not just for those who voted for him. The people of Wallasey will judge him by those words. They expect action to return prosperity to their area, and that means a sensible regional economic strategy and a flight from the current economic dogma which these privatisation proposals symbolise.

9.20 pm

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): This debate must be some sort of a world record because I find myself rising after 14 maiden speeches. My hon. Friend the Member for Wallasey (Ms. Eagle) said as part of an absolutely first-class contribution that tradition is not always right and should not always be observed. It was a splendid speech and I was interested in her prediction about the role of the Celts in the House over the next year or two. I shall certainly take her advice about tradition. I am sure that my hon. Friends and other hon. Members will forgive me if I take the maiden speeches at a fast trot, if that is the right way of putting it.

Mr. Prescott: Donald the Trot.

Mr. Dewar: We are exporting them. It is one of our little Scottish successes. Better keep your tolls and your bridges: that might discourage them. *[Laughter.]*

As I was saying, there was a long-honoured tradition of the nervous wait. As far as I can see, that has been well and truly buried by this generation of Members. The standard, too, has risen tremendously over the years. I first came to the House in 1966 for a brief period, by mistake. *[Laughter.]* My then constituents put that right at the first possible opportunity. I can remember what the House was like in those days and I can say with certainty that the standards have constantly risen in the intervening period. Moreover, I have the rather uncomfortable feeling that they are continuing to do so.

My hon. Friend the Member for Sunderland, North (Mr. Etherington) referred to the fact that one of his predecessors died of apoplexy after a council meeting. I fear that at times his temper and health may be sorely tried in his new career. My hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, East (Mr. Heppell) showed his inexperience only once: when looking round what seemed to me to be an almost crowded House he referred to the small attendance. He will soon learn. I congratulate him on his speech and the remarkable achievement of a 10·6 per cent. swing to Labour.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Ms. Jackson) is another who will get used to characteristically thin Houses in the time ahead. There is a small book of reference circulating on the Front Bench so that we can catch up with who is who. I notice that she is described in it as a shop assistant sponsored by the Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen. There is some passing mention of other interests. I have to say to her that it is not easy to come here with a reputation from outside, but the worth of her speech suggests that she will live down that disadvantage speedily.

My hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Ms. Jackson) made a first-class speech, concentrating on education. My hon. Friend the Member for Doncaster, North (Mr. Hughes) is one of a number who showed a deep knowledge of the mining industry. I am always amazed that as numbers in the mining industry decline people ask me where they all go, and I know. *[Laughter.]* My attention to that phenomenon was drawn by the appearance in our midst of my hon. Friend the Member for Midlothian (Mr. Clarke). He is what is known in Scotland as a kenspeckle figure. That means roughly that he has been shouting at me for the past 30 years. I certainly welcome his arrival. He knows his own area and the mining industry inside out—perhaps upside down would be a better way of putting it. He has served on the national executive committee of the Labour party and has come back for more. What more can loyalty demand?

My hon. Friend the Member for Sherwood (Mr. Tipping) recorded a famous victory and made an outstandingly sincere and knowledgeable speech. I certainly welcome the contribution of my hon. Friend the Member for Darlington (Mr. Milburn). I am glad to have Darlington back in the fold. I remember the by-election as I was there, and I remember the short life—parliamentary life, I am glad to say—of the then Member. I recognise the importance of that seat as a balancing point in British politics. However, the remarks that my hon. Friend the Member for Darlington made on the devolution of power endanger him being classed as a honorary Scot. I do not regard that as a great disadvantage, but he may find it a mixed blessing as things proceed.

It is only right to recognise that hon. Members on the Conservative Benches have made maiden speeches as have hon. Members from other parties. The hon. Member for Devon, North (Mr. Harvey) particularly impressed me. He has left the Chamber because he is a very important person as he has the secret of instant success. I cannot remember a maiden speech in which the person making it could announce that he was the transport spokesman for his party. I then remembered that the hon. Gentleman was a Liberal.

The hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Mr. Spring) told us about dramatic happenings at his local railway station. For those who were not present, it may seem rather cryptic, but I give the categorical assurance that I shall never travel from Bury St. Edmunds to Clacton on an Easter Sunday. The hon. Member for Erewash (Mrs. Knight) made an extremely competent and effective speech, on which I congratulate her. I had always thought that lace and old lace were made in Darvel and Newmilns in Ayrshire, but I now know better and I am glad for that information.

The hon. Member for Castle Point (Dr. Spink) had an unfortunate start. All sorts of people wished him as long a life as his predecessor, Sir Bernard Braine. I would not wish on anyone 40 years in this place. As an ex-solicitor, I know that that is the equivalent of four life sentences. There was also a good speech from the new Plaid Cymru Member, the hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Dafis).

Before I turn to the subject of the debate, I apologise for not dealing with the retreads, one or two of whom had a spin during the proceedings. If the hon. Member for Croydon, South (Mr. Ottaway) is properly reported in the

[Mr. Dewar]

public prints as having skiing and yachting as his principal interests, I can assume only that he will not be spending all his time in Croydon.

This is a debate about the Queen's Speech and, later, I want to say a word or two on what I am supposed to be talking about. Before I do that, I want to say a word or two about Scotland—a place somewhat to the north of this House. I wish to do so because the Scottish Office is a Department that scores low when it comes to ideas and, I am afraid, that is true of this Queen's Speech. The Scottish Office's contribution seems to be a collection of fairly unimportant bric-a-brac. I noted, although I am not surprised, that there was no reference or even a nod in the direction of the constitutional issue. There was nothing but a noticeable silence. I do not intend to spend much time on that, but I confess that I diagnose—I hope that this will not embarrass the Secretary of State—some very modest progress.

The Government now accept that there is a problem, but the trouble is that they have no idea at all as to what to do about it. They do not know how to prevent the Scottish question becoming, in the Prime Minister's particularly unhappy phrase, "a running sore" in British politics. It is perhaps too much to expect the Secretary of State to spell out the Government's intentions. After all, it is very difficult to define a void, but what we can expect is some account of the methodology and the timetable. In the debate on the Queen's Speech, the Prime Minister said:

"We will take stock of the present position in Scotland and then report back to the House. It is a matter of some importance and we will proceed with it. We are proceeding with it now, and when we have concluded, we shall report back to the House."—[*Official Report*, 6 May 1992; Vol. 207, c. 67.]

Those words are of some significance.

If the process is under way, as the Prime Minister specifically states, the Secretary of State should be able to give some useful information. Press reports this weekend suggested that it is all happening in Cabinet Committee L and the Secretary of State has been added to its numbers for the occasion. The proceedings of that committee are no doubt clothed in mystery. Indeed, it may be one of those Cabinet committees that, in theory, does not exist—I do not know—but the right hon. Gentleman can surely give some basic facts. Is the study on the government of Scotland specifically or does it take an overview of the United Kingdom as a whole, considering the problems of Wales and other areas like the north, where the centralised system has served the people ill?

In Scotland on Sunday 10 May, we were told that Downing street warned last night that

"the Prime Minister is taking stock and that debate still has a long way to run. There is nothing planned for Scotland in the next 18 months and we can't even say that it will be in the next 18 months after that."

Can the Secretary of State, at the very least, knock down that dreary message that suggests a policy of inaction and delay? Are we really expected to live for the next three years under a Government who have nothing planned for Scotland? Does not he realise that such a timetable is simply unacceptable?

Lord Fraser of Carmyllie, a Minister in the other place, who was plucked from the respectable political obscurity of the law to deal with constitutional matters, has promised "substantial not cosmetic change". Is his remit to wait and see what happens in Committee L or some other mysterious inner sanctum of Downing street, or has the Scottish Office an independent right of action? Scotland should know the outline of that unlikely concept —a Tory plan for constitutional change—at the earliest possible moment.

The Prime Minister has said that the objective is to make the Government more responsive to the needs of Scotland and that that must be done in a way that will not damage the Union. I agree, and I emphasise that Scotland's future should be as a full and equal partner in the United Kingdom. However, a certain way to damage that future is to show inflexibility now.

The Secretary of State must recognise that he will buy no friends with proposals that simply tinker with the present system. A Question Time in the Scottish Grand Committee or the appearance of a Scottish Select Committee are no substitutes for a genuine shift of power —the breakdown of the all-enveloping power nexus in Whitehall that has been at the heart of the present insensitivity of Government.

We expect the Scottish Select Committee to be brought to life but such a development should be justified on merit, not seen as a flimsy cover for a refusal to act on the central issue. The change that Scotland wants and needs cannot be met by some hybrid advisory body caught in a no-man's land between local and central government. The test—the essential benchmark—is the creation of a directly-elected body reflecting Scottish opinion and with the power that matters in a democracy—the power to make law. If the Government are prepared to do business on that basis, there will be real hope of progressing to a stable future.

There are many other issues in the Queen's Speech but one of particular interest today is the privatisation programme. I listened with interest to the contribution of the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. It was philosophical in approach but showed a remarkable disdain for practical detail. Perhaps naively, I hoped to learn something about the Government's plans. I did not. I accuse them of the oldest trick in the book, which is defining the opponent's position in a way that has nothing to do with the facts but everything to do with the convenience of one's argument. The Labour party is not still living in the shadow of Herbert Morrison. We are not spending our time debating the future of 200 monopolies or the legendary commanding heights. It is no good putting that up as our position in order to knock it down for personal satisfaction.

I was extremely intrigued when the right hon. Gentleman paraded the water industry as the ultimate argument against public ownership. It was a little less than tactful given that the debate was being summed up by the Secretary of State for Scotland, who has conspicuously —and rightly—not followed the path of privatisation of the water industry.

The argument is now about public interest and control, not about ownership. The Chancellor of the Duchy has a reputation for intellectual depth. At times, he sounded like Ronald Reagan, muttering about the wickedness of the concept of government. It is all nonsense and I suspect, to be fair to him, that he knows that it is nonsense.

The problem about the privatisation issue, particularly the public utilities, can be seen as the action of the Government. They have had to scramble, patch, mend, duck and dodge—trying to build in the regulatory

machinery. They have been inventing strange concepts such as competition by comparison when we know that, in reality, there is no competition.

The case against privatisation is simple. For all that the balancing act is difficult to achieve and, ultimately, the balance between profit and the interests of shareholders is difficult to reconcile with the interests of consumers, is the right price the price that the market will bear or the price that the consumer deserves? There will always be tension and confrontation between those two concepts. I am left with the uncomfortable feeling that much of the enthusiasm is based on prejudice and ideology, and some of it on the attraction of the financial proceeds of privatisation that shore up the rickety structure that the Government call a fiscal policy.

There is a paving Bill, which deals with coal and rail, but tells us nothing. The questions that remain are fundamental and far-reaching. Privatisation is a term that is hard to define, as I think that the Chancellor of the Duchy will recognise. He looked distinctly shifty on that issue, but he ultimately admitted that what was proposed for the railways in the Queen's Speech was not privatisation but something different. In our view, what is proposed is misconceived, but it is not the ultimate in privatisation.

The reason for that is clear. It is because the former Secretary of State for Scotland, the right hon. and learned Member for Edinburgh, Pentlands (Mr. Rifkind), and no doubt his predecessors, spent many months wrestling with the problems and trying to devise a privatisation scheme that they could present to the House. We have followed their tortured arguments, through newpaper cuttings and the media, but, ultimately, those politicians could not do it. Instead, they have come up with a different sort of scheme—a halfway house that they are presenting because they know that their ideology will not work in practice.

The argument is not simply about the wider vision of the inter-relationship between citizen and state, as the Chancellor of the Duchy tried to suggest. It was almost comic when the hon. Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) rose. He was not interested in that aspect, but wanted to know what the legislation would mean for the trains that run to Southend—a relevant and sensible question. If there is to be a private operator on the route to Southend, how is the rent that he pays for the track to be priced? How is his contribution to overheads to be priced?

I am told by those who know the Southern region better than me that British Rail is about to spend £50 million modernising the Southend line. If that is to be public money, how much is the southern version of Stagecoach to pay as its contribution to that sort of fixed overhead? What sort of contribution will it make for the right to run those trains? That is the sort of question to which the Government will have to find convincing answers quickly.

It is one thing to say that a firm such as Stagecoach can hitch on a couple of carriages. It may not be a sensible suggestion, but it is limited. But is the policy to go further than that? Will the firm be able to put on its own trains, drivers and staff? If it does, what will happen to safety standards and training? What happens to the untrammelled right to run the trains? Will it remain untrammelled or will there be arm's-length negotiations with the railways ultimately being able to say, "No more"?

Will the Minister address the issue of the picking off of the best routes in Scotland? Can he guarantee that, whatever happens, the routes in a district which constitutes one third of the land mass of Britain and which is heavily dependent above the central belt on public service lines will still run and still be funded?

What can we make of the position when Scottish papers are full of speculation that Waverley station in Edinburgh will be the prime site that is sold first as the flagship of the new compromise? We find tagged on to an article in the *Sunday Mail* the reassuring news that

> "A private company buying the station would have to give access for ScotRail track, trains and staff."

That is a relief—at least we are guaranteed that Waverley station will still have trains after the wonders of privatisation.

Can the Minister deny or confirm the report that appeared on the front page of *Scotland on Sunday* on 10 May that the Scottish board of British Rail is about to be disbanded? I hope that he can give us an assurance that that is not so, particularly in view of the reason given in the article, which is that the board

> "does not want ScotRail's advisory board leading private or public opposition to piecemeal privatisation north of the Border".

It seems a sad state of affairs if, in order to try to muzzle opposition, we start disbanding important parts of the advisory and management mechanism of British Rail.

Why is the public against this privatisation—a fact conceded by the hon. Member for Saffron Walden (Mr. Haselhurst), at least by implication, when he said that privatisation was not one of the principal reasons of success? The answer goes back to the scepticism to which I have referred about the clash between the interests of the profit-driven operator and the needs and interests of the consumer.

I have about a minute in which to discuss the coal industry, so my remarks will have to be compressed. Coal is an industry with a future and it should be at the heart of energy policy. I do not believe that hard decisions about where we get our fuel and how we price it should be ducked by the Government merely because they have privatised and changed the form of ownership. Will coal be sold as one unit or will it be broken up and packaged? If the latter, will the packages include deep-mine and opencast potential in each package? Will we sell the operations with the reserves attached to them, or will we sell geographical areas with all the unused and unworked reserves in them? Will there be an analogy with the North sea in which the Government hold the reserves and any exploitation will go out to tender? Half a thousand questions could and should be asked.

We are reduced in Scotland to one pit—the Longannet complex—but it is profitable, with a five-year contract with Scottish Power. But Monktonhall and the Frances, and many other parts of Scotland, have possibilities that ought to be explored, too. There is opencast on a massive scale. At Dalquandy, the biggest site, on the borders of Lanarkshire, I am told that the potential is for about 4 million tonnes a year, with a life of 40 years. The Minister will know and doubtless be thinking about the fact that there will be many who will argue that any scheme for disposal should allow a Scottish sale that includes deep mine and opencast elements. There is much to be found out and examined before we get to that point, but I hope that all these matters will be laid on the table before the Bill goes into Committee so that we are not, ludicrously, left

[Mr. Dewar]

having to pass a paving Bill which is in effect a parliamentary blank cheque while we still have no idea of how the Government will deal with the real issues.

The argument is not yet over; it has a long way to go both for coal and rail services. The Government still have to prove their case. I hope that they will be flexible but I take a gloomy view of the prospects of that. I fear that far too many Ministers will not even pay lip service to flexibility. The hon. Member for Southampton, Test (Mr. Hill), who I am sad to say is not in the Chamber now, said that an open mind was needed although, rather endearingly, he conceded that his own was set in concrete.

It is perhaps more sinister that when the Chancellor of the Duchy finally conceded that what was being offered to the railways was not privatisation in the full sense he went on, if I heard him correctly, to say that if this should lead to privatisation, so much the better. That confirms my fears that these proposals are buttressed by prejudice, that they are not well-founded in logic and that they are not in the public interest.

The Government should retreat. I remind them of the words of a well known Conservative rebel on this issue —the hon. Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley), who described rail privatisation as the poll tax on wheels. And look what happened to the poll tax.

9.43 pm

The Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Ian Lang): Like the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar), I begin by paying tribute to the rich crop of maiden speeches to which the House has been privileged to listen during today's debate.

First, there was my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, South (Mr. Ottaway), who, as the hon. Member for Garscadden said, is a retread. He follows in the footsteps of Sir William Clark, the distinguished chairman of the Conservative Back-Bench finance committee who is fondly remembered in the House. My hon. Friend brought an international flavour to his review of privatisation—a clear suggestion of a speech written for another day in this debate: indeed, the speech was also a retread. Nevertheless, my hon. Friend made his mark well in a previous incarnation in this place and the House will look forward to hearing from him again.

The hon. Member for Devon, North (Mr. Harvey), as the hon. Member for Garscadden pointed out, has made such a mark that he has already been appointed his party's transport spokesman. He paid a generous and welcome tribute to his predecessor, Tony Speller, and showed a great knowledge of and interest in his constituency.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Mr. Spring) paid a welcome tribute to Sir Eldon Griffiths and showed great knowledge of the history and present problems of his constituency and the railways. The hon. Member for Sunderland, North (Mr. Etherington) showed a knowlege to the history of Sunderland and mentioned its forgiving nature to absentee MPs, which I am sure he will never be. I hope that the hon. Gentleman is in his place.

The hon. Member for Nottingham, East (Mr. Heppell) spoke with confidence and assurance on local government and privatisation, not always with accuracy, but that can be a matter of opinion. The hon. Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Ms. Jackson) spoke about her priorities in education and about deregulation and health and safety issues. The House will soon want to hear from her again.

My hon. Friend the Member for Erewash (Mrs. Knight) made a distinguished speech using references with skill and ability. She showed great knowledge and a grasp of the issues and the geography of her constituency and spoke in particular about the lace industry and local government. The hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Dafis) demonstrated a knowledge of the railways and expressed clear views on environmental and constitutional matters. He spoke about harmful emissions of pollutants into the atmosphere and the House looks forward to his next speech.

I regret that I did not hear the only Scottish Back-Bench speech, that of the hon. Member for Midlothian (Mr. Clarke) who made what I am told was an excellent contribution. The House can imagine the enthusiasm with which I look forward to his next speech. I am sure that he will have many more opportunities in the House or in Committee to display his talents. He is the successor to Alex Eadie, a distinguished and much liked and respected figure. I am told that the hon. Gentleman spoke with authority and concern derived from 25 years underground in the coal industry and 16 years in local government.

He specifically asked about two matters which I shall deal with now in case they become lost. He asked about Frances colliery and Monktonhall colliery. As he knows, Frances colliery was closed following a fire during the miners' strike, with the loss of 500 jobs. It is currently maintained on a care-and-maintenance basis and the colliery's future is a matter for British Coal. However, reopening depends on several factors, not least of which is the need to secure a contract for its output. Monktonhall colliery has been on offer for third-party operation since December 1991, and two private sector organisations are interested in securing a contract with British Coal. It is encouraging to note that if Monktonhall colliery has a future, it seems to be in the private sector and not in nationalised management.

My hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Dr. Spink) made a fluent and entertaining speech which showed knowledge of his constituency and its needs and enthusiastic support for privatisation. I welcome my hon. Friend's tribute to Sir Bernard Braine, who was the Father of the House and highly regarded by all hon. Members.

The hon. Member for Doncaster, North (Mr. Hughes) spoke ably and interestingly about his constituency and about community care and privatisation. My hon. Friend the Member for Beckenham (Mr. Merchant), like my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, South, is paying a return visit to the House and this time I hope that he will stay longer. The House welcomed his sound knowledge of his constituency and listened with interest to his views on how rail privatisation might help his constituents.

The hon. Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Ms. Jackson) delivered her maiden speech in the accomplished way that one expects from someone with such a distinguished career already to her credit. We especially remember the great speeches of Queen Elizabeth I that she once delivered. In one of them the Queen dissolved Parliament and bade every Member before leaving for his shire to come and kiss her hand. Who knows where the hon. Lady might end up with an accomplishment of that kind. She also displayed knowledge of her constituency

and of housing matters and the House was grateful for her generous tribute to her predecessor, Sir Geoffrey Finsberg. We look forward to hearing her again.

The hon. Member for Sherwood (Mr. Tipping) paid a kind tribute to Andy Stewart, a displaced Scot and now doubly displaced and sadly missed in the House. Like his predecessor, the hon. Gentleman displayed great knowledge of the coal industry, and I am sure that he can be relied on to advance the interests of his constituents.

The hon. Member for Darlington (Mr. Milburn) inevitably spoke about railways. I am sure that the House is grateful for his tribute to Michael Fallon, a former Minister in the Department of Education and Science and, perhaps more significantly, a former Scottish Whip, who is much missed. The hon. Gentleman's fluency and knowledge of his constituency and of his constituents' interests and his clear views on the policies that the Government should be following will have impressed the House.

Finally, the hon. Member for Wallasey (Ms. Eagle) paid generous tribute to her predecessor, my right hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development. She also spoke with authority and fluency about her constituency and her priorities in this place.

All the maiden speeches that the House heard today were accomplished, confident and knowledgeable contributions that will enhance the reputation of the House. The House listened with interest and admiration to all of them and will look forward to hearing these speakers again.

The hon. Member for Garscadden tempted me to speak about the Scottish constitutional question, and I could reply at great length on that subject, as we have debated the issues concerned at considerable length. However, at this stage, I shall confine myself simply to saying that the Scottish Conservative party fought the election to this United Kingdom Parliament above all else as a unionist party. We rejected the charlatan potions of all the other parties and, although wipe-out was predicted, in the event we held all our seats and increased our representation in the House by more than one fifth.

We were the only party to increase both the number of seats and our share of the vote. For every three votes that the supposedly omnipotent Labour party secured, we got two. We got twice as many votes as the Liberal Democrats and four times as many seats as the Scottish National party. That clear rallying of support to us, despite the massive combined assault by all the other parties, was confirmed by last week's district council elections, in which our vote went up by one fifth and the number of our seats by one quarter. The Labour party fought the last election on devolution throughout the United Kingdom and was defeated in elections to the United Kingdom's Parliament. Where its case was argued strongest, in Scotland, the swing against it was the largest.

Ms. Hilary Armstrong (Durham, North-West): Does the Minister know that, in the northern region, the Labour party got more than 50 per cent. of the vote and that the commitment of the northern members of the Labour party was to devolution for the north? That was not a defeat.

Mr. Lang: Like hon. Members on both sides of the House, the hon. Lady stood for election to this United Kingdom Parliament, not to a Parliament for the north-east.

The hon. Member for Garscadden asked me various questions about the consideration of these issues. All that I can say at this stage is that the Government remain willing to consider ways to improve the mechanisms of the government of Scotland, provided that that does not jeopardise the integrity of the United Kingdom and its Parliament. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said that the Government were taking stock and that we would report back to the House, and that we shall do in due course.

Mr. Dewar: I shall be brief, as I recognise that the Secretary of State has much to talk about. However, I referred to a report, allegedly authoritative, from Downing street and gave a direct quote from a Downing street source saying that there would be nothing in the next 18 months and no undertakings in the 18 months after that. I am sure that the Secretary of State will recognise that that is a depressing and lengthy timetable. Can he say anything to encourage me?

Mr. Lang: I can give the hon. Gentleman no specific information on timetabling, except to say that the speculation that nothing will happen for 18 months is not accurate.

The issue that primarily occupied the House today was privatisation and, most particularly, privatisation of the rail and coal industries. Many hon. Members spoke about railways, and some had close personal and constituency interests. The Government fully recognise the contribution that an efficient rail network can make towards the country's transport needs, as evidenced by our approval —here I respond to my hon. Friend the Member for Saffron Walden (Mr. Haselhurst) who requested that we ease the grip of Treasury control—of unprecedented levels of investment, which have amounted to more than £8 billion at today's prices since 1979. Investment is now standing at the highest level for 30 years.

Introducing the disciplines and freedoms of the private sector will enable the railways to respond better to users' needs, and that will result in a better service to customers. To those who ask about our detailed proposals, I can respond by saying that the Government will publish a White Paper setting out our proposals as soon as they are ready. We shall continue to provide subsidy for loss-making regional rail services for as long as is necessary.

The arrangements will sustain the present national network of services. The liberalisation of access to the rail network for private sector operation can satisfy the necessary safety and competence standards. It is a positive move towards making the best use of the nation's railways and to seeing more traffic carried by rail. The development whereby Stagecoach Holdings is attaching two coaches for seated passengers on the Aberdeen-London train shows the sort of diversity and creative approach that can so much improve the quality of service to travellers.

Mr. Robert Hughes: During the election, the right hon. Gentleman dropped hints from time to time that we might get the electrification of the east coast main line between Edinburgh and Aberdeen. What are his plans for that? Under the Bill, who would pay for the capital development? Would he be asking Stagecoach to pay a substantial part of the capital development?

Mr. Lang: The hon. Gentleman is mistaken. I made no reference to the electrification of the Aberdeen-Edinburgh line during the election. I am sorry to disappoint the hon. Gentleman. I give him the same reply as that which I have given in the past, which is that it is a matter for British Rail. It has been investigating the matter at great length to ascertain whether the project would be economically viable.

My hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley) emphasised the importance of safety standards in the privatisation of the railways. That is something to which the Government attach the highest priority through the railway inspectorate. My hon. Friend asked me about the Dornoch Firth bridge. In general, projects of that kind are matters of judgment for British Rail. It has to decide whether additional investment for such a project could be justified commercially. In this instance both Highland regional council and British Rail have studied the proposition and concluded that public investment could not be justified.

The hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) talked about British Rail Engineering Ltd. and the position of employee shareholders. She suggested that those shareholders were being compelled to sell their shares. I understand that that is not the position. ASEA Brown Boveri, having taken over from Trafalgar House shares in BREL, is anxious to increase its holding by acquiring shares that are held by employees, but the employees are not obliged to sell. The unions are advising them not to sell. It is a matter for individual shareholders and not one for the Government.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Lang: I ask my hon. Friend to forgive me for not doing so. He was not present during the earlier part of the debate and I have little time left to me.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Selby (Mr. Alison) and the hon. Members for Sunderland, North and for Midlothian emphasised the importance of safety and suggested that safety considerations in a privatised coal industry would be at risk. There is no reason to believe that there would be any reduction or diminution of safety matters under privatisation. The Health and Safety Commission and its executive would be much involved in safety matters throughout. I readily acknowledge that safety remains a paramount consideration. There is no reason to believe that privatisation would make coal mining any less safe.

I have had little time to reply to the debate, but I want to say a few words about the underlying philosophies of privatisation and nationalisation. It is unsurprising that the Labour party is so preoccupied, especially in Scotland, with constitutional mechanisms. That is partly because, having failed in successive elections to win power through the established democratic processes, it is trying now to change the rules to its advantage. That lack of respect for checks and balances and for parliamentary democracy is recognised and resented by the British people. It is partly, too, because it has an unhealthy preoccupation with the exercise of power. That is based on an excessive belief in the role and functions of government. Nothing more clearly demonstrates that than its sustained addiction—it has been with the party throughout its life, which is now drawing peacefully to a close—to the draining and debilitating cause of nationalisation.

Nationalisation is an economic deformity. It is a dead end. To take over the commanding heights of the economy is at once to reduce them to the quagmire of the economy. Nationalisation cannot succeed, and now it is not only Britain but the rest of the world that know it. Labour's tragedy is a terminal one. However much it pretends that it is no longer wedded to nationalisation, and however much it renounces its creed, it cannot carry conviction because it is not convinced itself.

Clause IV is still there. It is still beating at the heart of socialist philosophy. With almost everything else excised, it is the heart of the socialist philosophy. I was struck by the ringing nature of the endorsement of the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott), when he said that he was quite happy to accept it. The Labour party mouths the phrases of decentralisation, free enterprise, choice, competition and private ownership, but nobody believes it because it does not believe these ideas itself. Its faith is a different one altogether. The Labour party cannot adapt because at its centre is an idea that has gone.

Privatisation is undoing the damage of nationalisation. It is returning the property confiscated by nationalisation. It is releasing a new life force to create wealth. It goes with the grain of human nature, it encourages enterprise, it generates prosperity, it enriches society and it is a force for good. That is why it will endure and why we, who support it, will endure.

It being Ten o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

Debate to be resumed tomorrow.

Forestry

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Robert G. Hughes.]*

10 pm

Sir Jim Spicer (Dorset, West): I open this short Adjournment debate by saying how delighted I am that the Minister—my hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro)—is to reply to the debate. It is his first time on the Front Bench for a few years. There is no one better qualified to speak about forestry. As a Scot, he knows how important forestry is in Scotland—although it is equally important for all in the United Kingdom. I warmly welcome him to the Front Bench.

I apologise to my hon. Friend and to you, Madam Speaker, as the debate was billed as being on the subject of the Forestry Commission. I am not saying that that is a dull subject, but it is not what I intend to speak about tonight. If anyone from the Forestry Commission is in the Gallery listening to the debate, he will be sadly disappointed.

I want to talk about the crisis in forestry in this country, which could and should have been dealt with over the years. I hope that it will be a debate in shorthand because those with an interest in forestry know what the problem is only too well. I shall briefly set the scene. Between 1980 and 1988 there was a renaissance in the forestry industry in Britain which benefited all sectors of the industry. Sometimes people think about the subject only in terms of forestry, but there are three sectors—the nursery men, the growers and the processors. They are interdependent and equally important.

During that period, the level of planting of broadleaf and conifers in private woodlands rose from 8,302 hectares to 23,821 hectares. There was near certainty that the target —and I stress that it was the Government's target—of 33,000 hectares would have been achieved by the year 1990-91. I am not arguing against the tax changes in 1988 because there were things that were wrong and things that needed to be put right. However, nobody really anticipated what would happen after those tax changes. I have a particular constituency interest as the first thing that happened was that 10 million plant orders were cancelled and a large nursery man in my constituency stopped production. In 1988 to 1990, there was a drop in planting in the private sector alone, from 23,000-plus hectares to 12,767 hectares. I am quoting the exact figures so that there is no nonsense about the matter. That massive reduction was not expected.

In 1988 and 1989 people said, "Don't worry. We have changed the tax system, we are moving over to grants, and grants will solve the problem." That has not happened and the haemorrhage and the lack of new planting have continued. Even the Forestry Commission reported in 1990 that new plantings totalled only 4,081 hectares—lower than in 1988. I apologise for giving more figures, but total planting in 1990 was 16,874 hectares, which was the lowest figure for 20 years—at a time when demand worldwide and in this country in particular had risen rapidly.

In 1989-90, spurred on by those with a great interest in the forestry industry, I went to see the then Secretary of State for Scotland, my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Pentlands (Mr. Rifkind), who gave an assurance that if the situation was as serious as we had indicated, he was only waiting for the planting figures for that year before taking action.

The scene is one of falling planting over four years, and with no take-up of the grant system that can ever compensate for taxation. Some people might ask why there is any need to worry. The reason is that 90 per cent. of this country's consumption of forestry products is imported, at a cost of £7·2 billion per year. Imported timber products account for our fourth largest trade deficit after vehicles, food, and fuel. My guess is that, given that our vehicle exports are doing so well, our third largest trade deficit is now accounted for by timber imports. Demand will double over the next 60 years, so if no action is taken that deficit will massively increase.

Another aspect relates more to industry and processing. Most people would not know what I was talking about if I were to mention the Shotton and Caledonian paper mills. They are state-of-the-art mills that are at the top of paper processing, and were established between 1980 and 1988, in the firm expectation that there would be a massive rise in forestry and wood products in this country. Sadly, they are to be disappointed. Some 55,000 people are employed in the private sector, to which one can add those working for the Forestry Commission and processors. Therefore, the livelihoods of a large number of people depend on an expansion in forestry.

Forestry is and always will be part of the agricultural and rural scene. At a time when we are facing cutbacks in agriculture, it is ludicrous that forestry, which could and should provide an alternative, is not being fully exploited and taking up more land. Twenty-five per cent. of the European Community's overall agricultural land is taken up by forestry and forestry work, whereas in this country the figure is only 10 per cent. We are not only at the bottom of the league table; we are right at the bottom of it. At the present rate of planting, we will stay there for many years to come.

Given that we face the certainty that our requirement for timber products will double over the next 60 years, it is unbelievable that we are prepared to import more timber without setting an environmental example by increasing our own planting capacity.

There is a crisis. That cannot be denied by any Minister, least of all those in the Treasury. It is summed up in a letter written to the Chancellor on 31 October by Mr. Christie-Miller, chairman of Timber Growers UK. He wrote:

> "The change in support for forestry from a tax based to a grant aided system is clearly not achieving the Government's aim, which is to sustain a healthy forestry industry whilst at the same time providing for a wide spectrum of public benefits including leisure, recreation, wildlife habitats and environmental enhancements."

I cannot believe that a single hon. Member would not say, "Hear, hear" to that.

What, then, are we to do about the crisis? The letter from which I have just quoted made some recommendations. First, it recommended that planting grants should be index-linked. Secondly, it recommended that land acquired for purposes of forestry should enjoy the same tax relief as agriculture on the interest on its purchasing loans. I quote the letter in shorthand, as it were; it exists, and can be quoted again—as I hope that it will be—in a further meeting with Treasury Ministers.

The third recommendation was the exclusion of forestry from inheritance tax. The fourth mentioned the

[Sir Jim Spicer]

need to broaden the base of forestry investment and ownership—the "people's capitalism" argument. That could be achieved through a unitised corporate vehicle whereby investors in forestry would be treated in a similar fashion to the individual investor. I shall not go into the details, but if my hon. Friend the Minister wants more information, he can refer to the people who really know what they are talking about—the timber growers.

Let me sum up my argument. No one can deny that there is a problem; no one can deny that we need more home-grown timber; no one can deny that at present, instead of seeing an increase in planting in this country, we are seeing a massive decrease. Something must be done. All that I ask of my hon. Friend is that he makes the strongest possible representations—on behalf not only of those who live in rural areas, but of all who care about our environment in this country and that of the rest of the world—and tries to persuade the Treasury to see some sense.

10.12 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Sir Hector Monro): I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Dorset, West (Sir J. Spicer) for the warm welcome that he gave me on my return to the Front Bench. No doubt he was almost as surprised as I was. The portfolio for which I am now responsible is a great asset in terms of the Scottish Office, and also in terms of the United Kingdom where forestry is concerned. The environment, the countryside, agriculture, fisheries and heritage have all been combined as a single responsibility, and I think that in the long run that will prove a tremendous advantage.

I am glad to speak on behalf of forestry. My constituency, along with that of my right hon. Friend the Member for Galloway and Upper Nithsdale (Mr. Lang), probably contains a larger acreage of planting than any other region in the United Kingdom in percentage terms. We are both particularly aware, therefore, of the importance of forestry to the rural economy—and, indeed, of the other aspects mentioned by my hon. Friend, such as recreation, tourism and, of course, employment.

My hon. Friend was right to raise the question of the industry as a whole, from the seedling to the ultimate manufacturing process. He must accept, however, that that is connected to a large extent with developments in the Forestry Commission and the private sector. Both are interdependent and extremely important.

The incentives that have been developed in the past year or two, and even in the last month or two, to increase planting are significant. The overall crop is also important. As my hon. Friend rightly said, the timber deficits, in terms of the balance of payments, are extremely important in United Kingdom terms. I shall cover as much ground as I can, but if I am unable to cover all of it by the end of the debate, I shall write to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

The Government are fully committed to developing and supporting the forestry sector. During the past 12 years, our record of policy initiatives has been one of considerable progress and achievement. The Forestry Commission has played, and continues to play, a central role in the development of forestry throughout Great Britain. We have made it clear on a number of occasions that we have no intention of privatising the Forestry Commission. That remains the position. Many Forestry Commission staff have asked me what policy the Government intend to pursue in the future. We have given a firm commitment not to privatise the Forestry Commission.

Only a month ago—this is important in terms of how forestry will develop—the Government commissioned a major reorganisation, designed to achieve a clear distinction between its regulatory and advisory roles as a Government department and the management of its forests. The commission has set up a policy and resources group at its Edinburgh headquarters. That group is responsible for supporting and advising Ministers on forestry policy. Moreover, the Forestry Authority, which provides advice and sets standards for the forestry industry as a whole, administers the grant schemes, carries out regulatory functions, such as felling control, and undertakes forest research. That will be particularly helpful as we move into the world of set-aside and encourage farmers to plant trees on land that is no longer required for agricultural purposes. Advice there is particularly required, though farmers do not always realise that advice is available from the commission.

Forest Enterprise will now be free to concentrate on managing the commission's forest estate of more than 1 million hectares on a multi-use basis—for recreation, wildlife, landscape and conservation, as well as for timber production. That shows that the commission is forward looking and that it is determined to develop woodland planting in this country.

Nearly 250,000 hectares of new forests have been created during the last decade, mainly by the initiative and enterprise of private owners. Wood production has more than doubled since 1970 and is set to double again—to reach 10 million cubic metres—over the next 20 years. British timber is of high quality and is in demand by our domestic wood processing industries. The longer-term confidence of the industry has been amply demonstrated by the investment of over £1 billion in new processing plant since 1980. Our wood processing industry can compete with the best in the world. The new mills and plants incorporate the latest in technical innovation in paper making, panel production and saw milling. That has enabled them to capture a significant share of our growing domestic requirement for wood products. All that has been made possible by the doubling of the area of woodland cover during the past 70 years.

Sir Jim Spicer: The fact that we are going to double our production is very impressive, but does my hon. Friend accept that unless we have new planting we shall be left with an awful chasm? That is what worries me. I am not worried about all the products that will appear as a result of the planting that took place between 1980 and 1988. That is marvellous. But what will happen when we hit that trough? That is what worries me, and it should concern us all.

Sir Hector Monro: Yes, indeed. I was just coming to the point about the downturn in private sector planting over the past two or three years. I am sure that my hon. Friend will be interested to know that new planting in England has increased. In 1987, the figure was 1,200 hectares, whereas in 1991—the latest year for which figures are available—it was 4,400 hectares. The picture should not

have been so depressing for nursery men and others in Dorset, but I know that conditions have been difficult for them.

In Scotland, the overall picture has been disappointing. The new grants offer an incentive to increase planting now and in the coming years. The woodland grant scheme, which we introduced in 1988, has made substantial progress. Grants range from £615 to £1,575 per hectare, depending on the size of wood and species of tree. I give these details because it is important to realise what is available to encourage people to plant more trees.

We recently introduced the better land supplement, which offers another £200 per hectare to £400 for conifers and £600 for broadleaf trees. That is another useful incentive. The woodland management grants are most important. As my hon. Friend will remember, possibly some of the fiercest criticism of the Chancellor's fiscal change was the fact that there would be no tax relief on maintenance in the later yars of the life of a plantation. Many foresters think that between 20 and 30 years is the crucial period for additional maintenance. The woodland management grant is of particular help in replacing what some foresters lost from the change in the fiscal system.

As late as last month we introduced a new community woodland supplement of £950 per hectare for establishing new woodlands open to the public and within easy reach of towns and cities. Its purpose is to encourage planting on the urban fringe to add to the amenity and to the overall amount of planting in this country. The native pine wood scheme encourages the management of existing pine woods in Scotland.

The most recent change or development has been our new farm woodland premium scheme, which provides grants to make planting more attractive to farmers. Its purpose is to offer a particular incentive to plant on good land. Farmers such as myself and many in my hon. Friend's constituency are reluctant, having looked after fields that require a lot of husbandary, to plant them into woodlands and know that their use as agricultural land has probably gone for ever. To encourage people to do so, bearing in mind our commitments in Europe to reduce overall production, there is a high grant for planting on good quality land and perhaps less grant for land of less importance, and certainly down to the less favoured areas.

We realise that there has been a drop in planting in the past two years. Only by raising the incentives as high as we can will the planting level be restored. My hon. Friend said —and this view is widely held among foresters in general —that we must think again about the change made to the fiscal system in 1988, but it is too early to be certain. I am sure that my right hon. Friend will want more time to assess the impact of our new grants on planting before any reconsideration of the tax incentives. Bearing in mind the fact that the overall grant to forestry probably equates to the amount of money that the Treasury had to pay in tax relief, I believe that that must almost have balanced the position.

However, we must accept that the forestry industry makes a substantial contribution to meeting our growing demand for wood. It supports and provides employment for people living in rural communities. The forests and woodlands also provide opportunities for people to enjoy and to have access to the countryside. They are also an essential habitat for a rich variety of wildlife.

My hon. Friend might be interested to know that earlier today I was in Perthshire at the inauguration of the new Scottish Natural Heritage, which is a combination of the Countryside Commission for Scotland and the Nature Conservancy Council, which will now have overall responsibility for many aspects of the habitat and conservation in Scotland, not of course directly for the Forestry Commission although it will co-operate very closely with the commission and, of course, with private woodland owners for whom we have the highest regard and whom we must do all that we can to help in the future.

Our policies deliver environmental as well as economic benefits. The Forestry Commission has a responsibility to ensure that full account is taken of all interests and that those interests are carefully balanced. The commission consults the statutory bodies that represent the interests of nature conservation, amenity and local people to ensure that planting schemes are, as far as possible, acceptable to all involved. Investors now fully recognise the need for planting to be sensitive to the environment. They are taking time to plan their planting schemes and, to assist in that, the Government are encouraging local authorities to prepare indicative strategies to show preferred areas for planting and areas that are environmentally sensitive.

However, we must keep bureaucracy to a minimum and the new Forestry Authority will be able to focus clearly on the needs of the private sector. It will put additional resources into its role of providing sound advice to woodland owners and of promoting the grant schemes at a time when new opportunities are opening up. In terms of bureaucracy, the authority is determined to make quick and speedy decisions because that is the right way to proceed, to encourage the planting of new areas, and not to allow the head of steam among the landowners to fall away because of the time given to the authority to proceed with planting.

On the whole, I am certain that the commission and the Government are doing a great deal to give incentives for planting and, therefore, to ensure that the total hectarage increases rather than decreases, as it certainly did in 1990 and 1991. I believe that the confidence stemming from the general election and the lowering of interest rates in every way encourages the landowner and private forestry developer to proceed in the future, knowing that he has the full backing of the Government and that the Forestry Commission will give every possible assistance in the form of grants, advice and experience.

Although I welcome the fact that my hon. Friend has raised this issue and shown his concern which will, of course, be considered by the Forestry Commission and the Government, I believe that we are on the right track, and I am personally confident that we will achieve great success in the coming year.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-nine minutes past Ten o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 12 May 1992

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Members Sworn

The following Members took and subscribed the Oath, or made and subscribed the Affirmation required by law:
Robert Parry, esquire, Liverpool, Riverside.
Julian Michael Gordon Critchley, esquire, Aldershot.

PRIVATE BUSINESS

CROSSRAIL BILL

KING'S CROSS RAILWAYS (No. 2) BILL

Orders for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time on Thursday.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Return ordered,

For Session 1991-92 of—

(1) the total number of Questions to Ministers or other Members which stood on the Order Paper, distinguishing those set down for oral, written priority and written answer respectively, the number of days upon which replies to Questions for oral answer were given in the House; and the total number of Questions for oral answer to which such answers were given in the House;

(2) the total number of Notices of Motions given for an early day;

(3) the number of Members ordered to withdraw from the House under Standing Order No. 42 (Disorderly conduct), showing separately the orders given in the House and those given in Committee; and the Members suspended from the service of the House under Standing Order No. 43 (Order in debate) or otherwise, distinguishing whether the offence was committed in the House or in Committee, the period of such suspension, the number of occasions on which more than one Member was so suspended having jointly disregarded the authority of the Chair, and the number of occasions on which the attention of the House was called to the need for recourse to force to compel obedience to the Speaker's direction; and

(4) the number of public petitions presented to the House, distinguishing separately those brought to the Table at the times specified by Standing Order No. 133 (Time and manner of presenting petitions).—*[The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

CLOSURE OF DEBATE AND ALLOCATION OF TIME

Return ordered,
Respecting—

(a) applications of Standing Order No. 35 (Closure of debate) during Session 1991-92:

(1) in the House and in Committee of the whole House, under the following heads:

1	2	3	4	5	6
Date when Closure claimed, and by whom	Question before House or Committee when claimed	Whether in House or Committee	Whether assent given to Motion or withheld by the Chair	Assent withheld because, in the opinion of the Chair, a decision would shortly be arrived at without that Motion	Result of Motion and, if a Division, Numbers for and against

and

(2) in the Standing Committees under the following heads:

1	2	3	4	5
Date when Closure claimed, and by whom	Question before Committee when claimed	Whether assent given to Motion or withheld by the Chair	Assent withheld because, in the opinion of the Chair, a decision would shortly be arrived at without that Motion	Result of Motion and, if a Division, Numbers for and against

and

(b) applications of Standing Order No. 28 (Powers of Chair to propose question) during Session 1991-92:

(1) in the House and in Committee of the whole House, under the following heads:

1	2	3	4	5
Date when Closure claimed, and by whom	Whether in House or Committee	Whether claimed in respect of Motion or Amendment	Whether assent given to Motion or withheld by the Chair	Result of Motion, and, if a Division, Numbers for and against

and

(2) in the Standing Committees under the following heads:

1	2	3	4
Date when Closure claimed, and by whom	Whether claimed in respect of Motion or Amendment	Whether assent given to Motion or withheld by the Chair	Result of Motion, and, if a Division, Numbers for and against

and

(c) the number of Bills in respect of which allocation of time orders distinguishing where appropriate orders supplementary to a previous order) were made under Standing Order No. 81 (Allocation of time to Bills), showing in respect of each Bill—

(i) the number of sittings allotted to the consideration of the Bill in Standing Committee by any report of a Business Sub-Committee under Standing Order No. 103 (Business sub-committees) agreed to by the Standing Committee, and the number of sittings of the Standing Committee pursuant thereto; and

(ii) the number of days or portions of days allotted by the allocation of time order and any supplementary order to the consideration of the Bill at any stage in the House or in committee, together with the number of days upon which proceedings were so taken in the House or in committee.—*[The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Delegated Legislation

Return ordered,

for Session 1991-92 of—

(A) the numbers of Instruments subject to the different forms of parliamentary procedure and those for which no parliamentary procedure is prescribed by statute (1) laid before the House; and (2) considered by the Joint Committee and Select Committee on Statutory Instruments respectively pursuant to their orders of reference, setting out the grounds on which Instruments may be drawn to the special attention of the House under Standing Order No. 124 (Statutory Instruments (Joint Committee)) and specifying the number of Instruments so reported under each of these grounds; and

(B) the numbers of Instruments considered by a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c., and by the House respectively, showing the number where the Question on the proceedings relating thereto was put forthwith under paragraph (5) of the Standing Order No. 101 (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).—*[The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Private Bills and Private Business

Return ordered,

for Session 1991-92 of—

(1) the number of Private Bills, Bills for the confirmation of Orders under the Private Legislation Procedure (Scotland) Act 1936, and Bills for confirming Provisional Orders introduced into this House, and brought from the House of Lords, and of Acts passed, specifying also the dates of the House's consideration of the several stages of such Bills;

(2) all Private Bills, Hybrid Bills and Bills for confirming Provisional Orders which were reported on by Committees on Opposed Bills or by Committees nominated by the House or partly by the House and partly by the Committee of Selection, together with the names of the selected Members who served on each Committee; the first and also the last day of the sitting of each Committee; the number of days on which each Committee sat; the number of days on which each selected Member served; the number of days occupied by each Bill in Committee; the Bills of which the Preambles were reported to have been proved; the Bills of which the Preambles were reported to have been not proved; and in the case of Bills for confirming Provisional Orders, whether the Provisional Order ought or ought not to be confirmed;

(3) all Private Bills and Bills for confirming Provisional Orders which were referred by the Committee of Selection to the Committee on Unopposed Bills, together with the names of the Members who served on the Committee; the number of days on which the Committee sat; and the number of days on which each Member attended;

(4) the number of Bills to confirm Orders under the Private Legislation Procedure (Scotland) Act 1936, distinguishing those proceeded with under section 7 and under section 9 respectively; specifying, in the case of Bills proceeded with under section 9 against which petitions were deposited, whether a motion was made to refer the Bill to a Joint Committee, and if so, whether such motion was agreed to, withdrawn, negatived or otherwise disposed of; and stating for each Joint Committee to which a Bill was referred the names of the Members of this House nominated thereto, the first and last day of the Committee's sitting, the number of days on which each Joint Committee sat for the consideration of the Bill referred to it, the number of days on which each Member of the Committee served, and whether the Committee reported that the Order ought or ought not be confirmed;

(5) the number of Private Bills, Hybrid Bills, Bills for the confirmation of Orders under the Private Legislation Procedure (Scotland) Act 1936, and Bills for confirming Provisional Orders withdrawn or not proceeded with by the parties, those Bills being specified which were referred to Committees and dropped during the sittings of the Committee; and

(6) the membership, work costs and staff of the Court of Referees and the Standing Orders Committee.—*[The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Public Bills

Return ordered,

for Session 1991-92 of the number of Public Bills (other than Bills to confirm Provisional Orders and Bills to confirm Orders under the Private Legislation Procedure (Scotland) Act 1936) distinguishing Government from other Bills, introduced into this House, or brought from the House of Lords, showing—

(1) the number which received the Royal Assent; and

(2) the number which did not receive the Royal Assent, indicating those which were introduced into but not passed by this House, those passed by this House but not by the House of Lords, those passed by the House of Lords but not by this House, those passed by both Houses but Amendments not agreed to; and distinguishing the stages at which such Bills were dropped, postponed or rejected in either House of Parliament, or the stages which such Bills had reached by the time of Prorogation.—*[The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Sittings of the House

Return ordered,

for Session 1991-92 of the days on which the House sat; stating for each day the day of the month and day of the week, the hour of the meeting, and the hour of the adjournment; the total numbers of hours occupied in the sittings of the House; and the average time; showing the number of hours on which the House sat each day and the number of hours after the time appointed for the interruption of business; and specifying, for each principal type of business before the House, how much time was spent thereon, distinguishing from the total the time spent after the hour appointed for the interruption of business.—*[The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Special Procedure Orders

Return ordered,

for Session 1991-92 of—

(1) the number of Special Procedure Orders presented, the number withdrawn; the number annulled; the number against which Petitions or copies of Petitions were desposited; the number of Petitions of General Objection and for Amendment respectively considered by the Chairmen; the number of such petitions certified by the Chairmen as proper to be received and the number certified by them as being Petitions of General Objection and for Amendment respectively; the number referred to a Joint Committee of both Houses; the number reported with Amendments by a Joint Committee, and the number in relation to which a Joint Committee reported that the Order be not approved and be amended respectively; and the number of Bills introduced for the confirmation of Special Procedure Orders; and

(2) Special Procedure Orders which were referred to a Joint Committee, together with the names of the Commons Members who served on each Committee; the number of days on which each Committee sat; and the number of days on which each such Member attended.—*[The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Standing Committees

Return ordered,

for Session 1991-92 of—

(1) the total number and the names of all Members (including and distinguishing Chairmen) who have been appointed to serve on one or more Standing Committees showing with regard to each of such Members, the number of sittings to which he was summoned and at which he was present;

(2) the number of Bills, Estimates, Matters and other items referred to Standing Committees pursuant to Standing Order No. 101 (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.), or Standing Order No. 102 (European Standing Committees), considered by all and by each of the Standing Committees, the number of sitttings of each Committee and the titles of all Bills, Estimates, Matters and other items as above considered by a Committee, distinguishing where a Bill was a Government Bill or was brought from the House of Lords, and showing in the case of each Bill, Estimate, Matter and other item, the particular Committee by which it was considered, the number of sittings at which it was considered

(including, in the case of the Scottish Grand Committee, the number of Meetings held in Edinburgh pursuant to a motion made under paragraph 3 of Standing Order No. 94 (Scottish Grand Committee)) and the number of Members present at each of those sittings; and

(3) the membership, work, costs and staff of the Chairmen's Panel.—*[The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

SELECT COMMITTEES

Return ordered,

for Session 1991-92 of statistics relating to the membership, work, costs and staff of Select Committees (other than the Standing Orders Committee).—*[The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Oral Answers to Questions

HEALTH

Accident and Casualty Department, Haringey

1. **Mrs. Roche:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she has any plans to set up an accident and emergency casualty department in the borough of Haringey.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Tom Sackville): No. As the hon. Lady will be aware, the residents of Haringey receive accident and emergency services from excellent local hospitals.

Mrs. Roche: Is the Minister aware that the two local hospitals, Whittington and North Middlesex, are extremely overstretched and in a financial crisis and that a consultant at North Middlesex hospital estimates that if it were to keep to its contracts for paediatric care it would have to turn away 600 sick children seeking admission from accident and emergency treatment? Does that not make a sham of the pledge in the Gracious Speech to improve the quality of the national health service?

Mr. Sackville: No. There is no question of any patients being turned away from either hospital. I suggest to the hon. Lady that she might like to take a step back from her party's usual policy of denigration from a distance, visit the accident and emergency units and let me know of her impressions.

Mr. Evennett: Will my hon. Friend confirm that the Government are determined to improve health services for the whole of Greater London and to ensure that the needs of London are matched by the resources to improve health care for everyone in the capital?

Mr. Sackville: I thank my hon. Friend for those observations. No residents of Haringey are more than 3 miles from one of the accident and emergency units. There is no reason why they should not have an excellent service.

Mr. Bernie Grant: North Middlesex hospital might be three miles from south Tottenham where my constituents live, but on a Saturday afternoon, especially when Spurs are playing, the High road becomes virtually a war zone, which means that my constituents are not able to get to the hospital. What will the Minister do about that?

Mr. Sackville: I am aware of various complaints that the hon. Gentleman has made about North Middlesex hospital. As far as I know, none of the complaints that the Department has received has involved football matches. There is at least one complaint, however, on which I intend to receive a report.

Women Doctors

2. **Mr. Hargreaves:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many family doctors *(a)* in 1979 and *(b)* currently are women.

The Secretary of State for Health (Mrs. Virginia Bottomley): At 1 October 1979, there were 3,261 women general medical practitioners; the number had risen to 6,430 at 1 October 1991. This represents an increase of 97·2 per cent.

Mr. Hargreaves: Does my right hon. Friend believe that those figures suggest an answer to those general practitioners who were concerned that changes to their funding arrangements would inevitably lead to a reduction in the number of female general practitioners?

Mrs. Bottomley: It certainly is a clear answer. The general practitioner contract made it clear for the first time that there could be part-time general practitioners, which was a help for women. We improved the locum arrangements for those wanting to go on maternity leave. There has been a substantial increase in the number of women GPs and we want to see the same increase in the number of women consultants. In our targets for the Opportunity 2000 programme we make it clear that we are determined to see progress for nurses, women doctors and members of health authorities and trusts. We want to see the development of women's careers throughout the service.

Perioperative Deaths

3. **Mr. Connarty:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on her response to the conclusions of the national confidential inquiry into perioperative deaths.

The Minister for Health (Dr. Brian Mawhinney): We welcome this report. It shows that standards of surgical and anaesthetic care are generally high and have improved since earlier reports.

Mr. Connarty: Is the Minister aware that Professor Donald Campbell, who chaired the review, expressed concern about the inadequate location of emergency facilities, emergency operating theatres, intensive care units and high dependency units? Is he aware also that concern was expressed about the lack of adequate staffing in some of those units? I know that the Government's policy for Scottish health is dealt with by the Scottish Office, but the Government's general policy obviously impinges on my constituency. For example, is the Minister aware that nurses at Falkirk royal infirmary are expressing concern that the high dependency unit is not staffed adequately to be an intensive care unit? Does the Minister plan to do anything about the report in the near future?

Dr. Mawhinney: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will be encouraged to know that the inquiry found that the standards of surgical and anaesthetic care were high and that the overall trends demonstrated considerable improvements since earlier reports. As for the hon. Gentleman's constituency, he will know that that is a matter for my noble Friend the Under-Secretary of State.

Mr. Devlin: I congratulate my hon. Friend and the rest of the health team on their new appointments.

I point out to my hon. Friend that the report of the confidential inquiry into perioperative deaths shows that there are far too many intensive care units in small hospitals across the country and calls for their concentration into bigger trauma and stress units in centres of population. Does not that throw up some interesting conclusions for the large number of hon. Members on both sides of the House who frequently argue for the continuation of their own small cottage hospitals?

Dr. Mawhinney: I thank my hon. Friend for his kind remarks. He will be encouraged to know that there are nearly 2,500 available beds in intensive care units in England and more than 300 about to open.

We want to improve the provision of intensive care if possible, and proposals from the College of Anaesthetists are being considered.

Ms. Harman: I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on his appointment as Minister. Will he, however, demonstrate a little more concern and a little less complacency about a report which states that there are needless deaths after surgery because of the shortage of consultants and the lack of intensive care units? Perhaps, instead of telling us that everything is perfectly all right and running smoothly, the hon. Gentleman will act on the findings of the report and deal with the shortage of consultants and the lack of intensive care units.

Dr. Mawhinney: I am grateful for the hon. Lady's kind remarks, soured ever so slightly by the rest of her question. Ministers are not complacent. I have already told the hon. Lady of the number of intensive care beds and the fact that more are to be opened. She also asked about the number of consultants. She might more properly have mentioned the extra 100 consultants in acute specialties whose posts were created following publication of the White Paper "Working for Patients". I did not hear her mention, either, the 350 new consultants' posts that have been agreed as part of the new deal for junior doctors.

Health (Funding)

4. **Mr. Channon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has for providing extra money for underfunded health districts in overfunded health regions.

Dr. Mawhinney: Regional health authorities are responsible for revenue allocations to health districts. Every regional health authority was given a real increase of at least 3·5 per cent. for 1992-93, allowing a margin for all regions to bring underfunded districts closer to their weighted capitation share.

Mr. Channon: Is my hon. Friend aware that for many years Southend has been in this position, that there has been some modest extra help, which is welcome and which has provided extra benefits for residents of Southend, but that the process must go on? Will he make it his policy while he holds his portfolio to ensure that money follows the patient, so that those who treat most patients are given adequate money to do so?

Dr. Mawhinney: Yes. I know of my right hon. Friend's continuing concern about this matter. I am grateful that he recognises that North East Thames region went out of its way to be helpful to Southend, which started the year at about 10 per cent. below average and, as a result of the extra money provided to it in this financial year, is now less than 5 per cent. below average. I am glad that my right hon. Friend welcomes that, and I can assure him that the process will continue. I hope that it will even reach a conclusion in the next financial year.

Mrs. Mahon: Will the Minister comment on underfunding in intensive care units over the past five years, and on the report by Paddy Ross, the eminent surgeon who resigned from the Tory party because of

underfunding and the Government's reforms? I will pass his letter on to the Minister. He states that a woman died in the Royal Hampshire hospital, possibly because of underfunding in the intensive care unit. Will the Minister make up that funding and stop tragedies like that happening again?

Dr. Mawhinney: I will be happy to receive the letter if the hon. Lady cares to send it to me. Her question must be viewed in the context of record spending in the health service this year, including in the Halifax area. Against that background I find her comments rather hard to understand.

Health Green Paper

5. **Mr. Steen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many organisations have responded to the Green Paper "The Health of the Nation".

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Almost 1,200 responses were received from organisations and associations; a further 900 replies were received from individuals. That demonstrates the very great interest in the initiative to improve health, which is high on the Government's agenda and to which I attach the highest importance.

Mr. Steen: I welcome the excellent Green Paper, particularly as it points out the need to reduce smoking in all age groups. Bearing in mind that some 60 per cent. of patients in hospitals are there because of some smoking or smoking-related disease, does my right hon. Friend agree that we should ban smoking in public places or at least cordon off an area so that smokers can enjoy smoking without infecting all those who do not enjoy it?

Mrs. Bottomley: I thank my hon. Friend for his generous remark about the Green Paper, the credit for which is entirely due to my predecessor, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. For the first time, we have a strategy to prevent ill-health as well as to treat it, and that is a significant achievement. My hon. Friend has long been a champion of the anti-smoking cause. Great progress is being made in banning smoking from many public places. As my hon. Friend will know, we prefer the voluntary approach, but there are times when legislation is required. We are now seeing the removal of smoking from various forms of public transport, from many public places and from Government offices, and we shall continue to maintain the momentum.

Mr. Eastham: May I impress upon the Secretary of State the need to give greater thought to dental care, especially for young children? Would not it be a good idea to include the sugar content on soft drink labels on such as Coca Cola, which I understand contains about seven spoonfuls of sugar and is detrimental to children's teeth? Will the right hon. Lady do something about that?

Mrs. Bottomley: I am able to report that our record on children's dental health is impressive, but I appreciate the hon. Gentleman's thinking, which is exactly the thinking behind the health strategy. We want to think widely about labelling and how we can improve health and prevent disease. In addition to thinking in terms of health services, the effective provision of information is exactly the way forward.

Mr. Jessel: Does my right hon. Friend recognise that back pain causes massive absenteeism, distress and waste and that the problem is increasing by 13 per cent. a year? Does she agree that the National Back Pain Association deserves positive support and encouragement?

Mrs. Bottomley: Having just welcomed my constituent, my hon. Friend the Member for Aldershot (Mr. Critchley), to the House, I am well aware of the difficulties caused by back pain. My hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel) is right. Back pain is a significant cause of disability and disease, not least among health service staff, and it is one of the matters that we are considering. The Health and Safety Executive is bringing forward guidelines through the Health Service Advisory Committee. The organisation to which my hon. Friend referred clearly has an important part to play in promoting awareness and understanding.

Mr. Robin Cook: I add my congratulations to the Secretary of State on her promotion. I also congratulate her on presiding over a team which contains the largest number of Ministers in the history of the NHS, which may seem odd since they administer the fewest hospitals in the history of the NHS. Can the Secretary of State confirm that since the Green Paper was published she has received a report from her own officials that an advertising ban would cut tobacco consumption and, therefore, cancer? Why, then, does she not drop Britain's objection to a European advertising ban? It surely is not because Imperial Tobacco provided the Conservative party with 2,000 poster sites during the election and on this issue the health of the Conservative party comes before the health of the nation.

Mrs. Bottomley: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his welcome, but he never seems to change. He always has a cynical reaction. He always concentrates on means, not ends. In the same way as he comments on the number of hospitals and not on the quality of patient care, he is always addressing the wrong issue. We are determined to achieve a further fall in tobacco smoking in Britain. We have one of the most powerful records of any country in the EC. It is interesting that many of those countries which support a ban on tobacco advertising have their own nationalised tobacco industries and all of them except one have cheap cigarettes. We believe in fighting smoking by means of price and advertising and we do not support the subsidy on tobacco growing through the common agricultural policy. We will achieve the ends. I am fed up with the hon. Gentleman constantly looking at the means and not the ends.

Family Doctors

6. **Mr. Hawksley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much funding was provided for family doctors in 1989-90; and what is the current level of provision.

Mr. Sackville: The sum of £1·5 billion was provided for general medical services in 1989-90. The figure for the current year is £2·4 billion.

Mr. Hawksley: I thank my hon. Friend for that encouraging answer. Recent opinion polls show that nine out of 10 patients think that they receive a good service

from their general practitioners. Does my hon. Friend think that there has been a great change in the past few years?

Mr. Sackville: It is not surprising that there is general satisfaction with primary care. The number of practice staff has nearly doubled over the past 10 years, as has the number of services that practices offer.

AIDS

7. **Dr. Strang:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps she is taking to ensure that health authorities are spending appropriately money allocated for HIV and AIDS; and if she will make a statement.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Tim Yeo): Health authority use of earmarked funds for AIDS-related services is monitored through the reports required under the AIDS (Control) Act 1987. From this year, we have also introduced a requirement for regions to submit to the Department forward spending plans, which will be checked against quarterly monitoring reports.

Dr. Strang: Does the Minister agree that it is more important than ever that health authorities allocate adequate resources to help to prevent the spread of AIDS and to provide care and treatment to those who are HIV positive or who have AIDS? The House welcomes the Minister's confirmation that quarterly monitoring is now supplementing the annual reports made under the AIDS (Control) Act 1987. May we take it that the Government are determined to ensure effective ring fencing of the money required for those purposes?

Mr. Yeo: I acknowledge the hon. Gentleman's close interest in that subject over the years and confirm that the Government are determined to ensure, through the quarterly monitoring reports, which are operating for the first time in the current year, that the substantial resources allocated to AIDS-related services are used for the intended purposes. Those resources amount to more than £180 million in the current year, which is a rise of more than one third over last year, and contribute to expenditure of more than £650 million since 1987.

Regional Health Authorities

8. **Mr. Bayley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the future of regional health authorities.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We have no current plans to change the role of regional health authorities, although we will be examining their role as we continue to implement our reforms to improve the health service.

Mr. Bayley: It is odd that the Secretary of State makes no mention of the newly created regional outposts of the NHS management executive, which are assuming powers in relation to opted-out hospitals that were previously the province of regional health authorities. Unlike those authorities, regional outposts do not meet in public or have members who are accountable to the public, and they were not established by statute. Will the Secretary of State describe the role of the new regional outposts, explain what will be left for regional health authorities to do, and state whether there will be a statutory basis for the outposts—or will they be part of a secret, centralised, east European-style command economy for the national health service?

Mrs. Bottomley: The six regional outposts will essentially monitor the financial effectiveness of NHS trusts and report back to the management executive. The role of the regions will remain as it is—that of central authorities seeing through the priorities established by Ministers and the management executive. This year, regions are charged with ensuring further progress with the patients charter, which is a central element in our health programme, seeing through the further implementation of community care and enhancing the health of the nation. They work by monitoring and, with the family health services and district health authorities, strengthen the purchasing power which, as the hon. Gentleman will be aware, is the key to securing the quality improvements that are so important to the nation's health.

Mr. Dunn: Does my right hon. Friend agree that regional health authorities are too vast, bureaucratic and remote, and that the sooner we move to a system of direct funding for the capital works of district health authorities, the better the service will be run?

Mrs. Bottomley: My hon. Friend will be reassured to learn that the number of staff working in regional health authorities has fallen in recent years. The authorities have a function—to form a link between the management executive and Ministers, and the district health authorities—and it is important for the task that they are undertaking to benefit the districts and to be properly understood. I shall bear my hon. Friend's comments in mind.

Ms. Armstrong: Is the Secretary of State aware that many regional health authorities are not releasing sufficient funds to get community care up and running? How does she intend to ensure that local authorities have enough resources from the regions to be able to put community care into operation?

Mrs. Bottomley: The hon. Lady will know that the success of community care depends on an effective relationship between social service departments and regional health authorities. At present, we ask them to report to us every six months—and more often—to make certain that the work is under way.

District health authorities have been involved for 20 or 30 years in community care for people with learning disabilities, the mentally ill and elderly patients. The question of resources for social service departments arises regularly in the yearly local authority spending round, and we have made it clear that community care will be fairly funded.

Health Promotion

9. **Mr. Quentin Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health to what extent family doctors are improving health promotion.

Dr. Mawhinney: Significant progress has been made since the introduction of the GPs' new contract. In particular, there are now more GPs holding health promotion clinics, immunisation uptake is rising and more women are being screened for cervical cancer.

Mr. Davies: Do not the new targets in the GPs' contract relating to child immunisation, regular health checks, cervical cytology, mammography and other diagnostic procedures represent a revolutionary advance in the practice of preventive health care?

Dr. Mawhinney: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. This is a new, innovative and very important development in the preventive work of general practitioners. In the context of prevention and health promotion, I am sure that my hon. Friend and the rest of the House will be pleased to know that in 1990, for the first time in the United Kingdom, no child died from acute measles.

Mr. George Howarth: Has the Minister any proposals to involve GPs in trying preventive measures to stop the spread of anorexia nervosa—which is very worrying, especially in view of its effect on young women? The problem needs to be tackled and it seems to me that GPs are the obvious starting point.

Dr. Mawhinney: I share the hon. Gentleman's concern about the disease, which is indeed very worrying and, as he knows, can sometimes be fatal. I am sure that he is right to point out that the initial contact between patient and general practitioner is significant—it may even be crucial in some cases—and I will bear his comments in mind.

Immunisation

10. **Mr. Brazier:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proportion of children are now immunised against *(a)* whooping cough and *(b)* measles; and what was the proportion in 1978.

Mr. Yeo: By February 1992, 89 per cent. of children aged two had been immunised against whooping cough and 91 per cent. against measles. This is a big improvement since 1978, when only 31 per cent. were immunised against whooping cough and 48 per cent. against measles.

Mr. Brazier: Does my hon. Friend agree that those welcome figures have been caused partly by the new GP contract, which has had a very good effect on the level of immunisation in the past couple of years? As the Minister for Health has just pointed out, we have managed to achieve a year with no deaths from measles. Is not that yet another sign that the new contract is bearing fruit?

Mr. Yeo: My hon. Friend is quite right. The GPs, like everyone else involved in the programme, are owed a great debt of gratitude. The figures show how successful the contract was; they also show how utterly wrong the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) was in 1989, when he described the target set for general practices as

"heroic . . . far beyond the present figure for most practices".—[*Official Report*, 25 July 1989; Vol. 157, c. 910.]

As usual, the hon. Gentleman underestimated what the national health service can achieve with Conservative policies, under Conservative leadership and with the backing that the present Government give the health service.

Charitable Fund Raising

11. **Mr. Enright:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement about charitable fund raising for national health service services.

Dr. Mawhinney: We value the charitable contributions that people make to the health service through their voluntary efforts.

Mr. Enright: Is the Minister aware that a considerable number of hospital managers have declared that they are dependent on charity for their services? It must be true—it was in *The Daily Telegraph*. Is the Minister also aware that the Charity Commissioners have consistently stated—and I quote—

Hon. Members: Reading.

Madam Speaker: Order. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman is not reading from any speech. *[Interruption.]* Hear me out, please. If the hon. Gentleman is quoting, that is not permissible. Will he please paraphrase?

Mr. Enright: Is the Minister further aware that the Charity Commissioners have consistently stated that moneys raised through charity cannot be used for statutory purposes in the health service? How does he square that circle?

Dr. Mawhinney: There is no circle to square. The health service is better funded now than ever before. As the hon. Gentleman quoted to me, I will paraphrase to him. A pressure group suggested recently that total charitable funding amounted to £370 million. I do not know whether that is right, but if it is, it represents £1 for every £92 of taxpayers' money going towards the health of the nation. I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman should adopt such a mean attitude to the voluntary activities of the many people who want to put something back into a health service that they value.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: While warmly welcoming the large sum of money raised from charitable sources for the national health service, can my hon. Friend assure the House that any such moneys that are raised either in districts or in regions will not be offset by reductions in money and resources from the Department of Health that would otherwise be made available for services or equipment to improve health care in this country?

Dr. Mawhinney: My hon. Friend has a good point and I am happy to give that categorical assurance. In fact, I would go further. Whatever money is raised by charitable activities is neither known nor taken into account by the Department when it comes to deciding how much taxpayers' money should be invested in the health service.

Ms. Lynne: Is the Minister aware of the tragic case of four-year-old Laura Davies, who is desperately in need of a bowel and kidney transplant which is not available in this country? The *Manchester Evening News* has mounted a campaign which we all welcome, but can the Minister say whether national health service money will be made available for that life-saving operation in the United States?

Dr. Mawhinney: I am aware of the case and I understand that discussions are proceeding to try to find a way to address that issue.

Mr. Couchman: Does my hon. Friend agree that for very many years people have enjoyed raising charitable funds for the health service because it gives them a sense of being involved in their own health care? Is not that

wholly to be applauded, particularly as it frequently leads to the provision of capital equipment, the revenue consequences of which the NHS is then happy to take on?

Dr. Mawhinney: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. People wish to make contributions to the health service for a variety of reasons—some out of gratitude for the service that they or their families have received, others out of humanitarian concern, others out of Christian compassion, and for many other reasons. Only the most mean-spirited Opposition Members find that objectionable.

Mr. Robin Cook: Is the Minister aware that the charities report to which he referred concluded that the growth in NHS charities under the Government has been five fold? Does not that trouble him in the slightest? Has he no worries when the collecting can goes round for intensive care cots? Has he no concern that services for mental health and geriatrics, which are not charitable money spinners, might be left further behind? In his first month as Minister for Health will he remember the warning of the first Minister for Health that warm gushes of self-indulgence are not a reliable source of funding for a public health service?

Dr. Mawhinney: I will tell the hon. Gentleman what I shall remember. I shall remember a 56 per cent. real increase in spending on the NHS under this Government as against a 17 per cent. decrease under the last Labour Government. I shall remember a capital increase of 76 per cent. under this Government against a 29 per cent. decrease under the last Labour Government. I hope very much that the hon. Gentleman will come out of character and not be one of those mean-spirited people who want to stop those who wish to make a contribution over and above that of the taxpayer from doing so.

Hospital Waiting Lists

12. **Mr. Shersby:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what has been the change in the last year in the number of patients waiting over two years for hospital treatment.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I am today publishing provisional waiting time figures for the year to 31 March 1992. They are available in the Library. I have arranged for the figures to be printed in the *Official Report*. In the past year the number of patients waiting over two years for hospital treatment fell 97 per cent. That is a remarkable achievement of which the NHS can rightly be proud.

Mr. Shersby: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the whole House will have been pleased to hear those figures? Will she tell the House what progress has been made in reducing the waiting lists in my district health authority of Hillingdon?

Mrs. Bottomley: I can give my hon. Friend that information. In his health authority, remarkable progress has been made. There are no two-year waiters. The total list has come down by 27 per cent. per year. The list for one to two-year waiters has gone down by 18 per cent. and the list for under one-year waiters has gone down by 9 per cent. My hon. Friend has a district health authority in a region which has done similarly well. In the past year it has dealt with more than 5,200 of the over two-year waiters and reduced the one to two-year waiters and the under one-year waiters. That is a practical demonstration of our commitment to a better health service which meets patients' needs.

Miss Lestor: May I remind the Secretary of State that my constituent, Laura Davies—to whom the hon. Member for Rochdale (Ms. Lynne) has already referred, without consultation with me—does not have two years or two months to wait for funding for her operation in America? I have written two letters to the right hon. Lady in the past two weeks asking what financial help is forthcoming in addition to the efforts being made in my constituency and around to raise money. Will the right hon. Lady tell me why she has not replied?

Mrs. Bottomley: The hon. Lady will shortly receive a reply from me. I am having discussions with the regional health authority chairman and the chief medical officer. I regret the way in which individual cases become the subject of discussion in this place, because it is an intrusion on the personal difficulties and sadness of the families involved. I am well aware of the detail of the case, the complexity of the treatment that the patient needs and the treatment that she has already had in this country. I am having discussions to see what more can be done to assist her.

Following is the information:

Provisional[1] waiting time figures year ending 31 March 1992
In-Patients and day cases combined

Region	March 1992—and percentage change since March 1991							
	Under 1 year:		1 to 2 years:		Over 2 years:		Total	
	Number	Per cent. change	Number	Per cent. change	Number	Per cent. change	Number	Per cent. change
Northern	53,292	12·5	3,992	−15·2	1	−99·9	57,285	7·0
Yorkshire	63,196	5·1	6,422	−23·9	16	−99·5	69,634	−2·9
Trent	76,229	9·8	9,281	0·4	4	−99·7	85,514	6·9
East Anglian	36,326	−0·7	4,688	−29·8	41	−98·8	41,055	−12·2
North West Thames	46,565	−2·7	9,160	−11·6	2	−100·0	55,727	−12·1
North East Thames	68,723	6·1	8,687	−29·0	748	−88·7	78,158	−6·6
South East Thames	68,005	8·7	8,170	−23·5	96	−98·5	76,271	−4·4
South West Thames	44,038	6·6	2,323	−66·5	0	−100·0	46,361	−7·8
Wessex	52,299	6·4	4,076	−39·3	0	−100·0	56,375	−4·5
Oxford	40,353	6·9	5,848	−15·1	0	−100·0	46,201	−2·9
South Western	62,916	7·0	2,766	−72·7	10	−99·8	65,692	−10·4
West Midlands	84,392	5·4	5,452	−53·8	158	−97·2	90,002	−7·8
Mersey	49,653	14·2	428	−85·0	0	N/A	50,081	8·1
North Western	77,020	10·9	6,772	−30·5	3	−99·9	83,795	0·3
All Regions	823,007	7·1	78,065	−33·5	1,079	−97,9	902,151	−3·7

Region	March 1992—and percentage change since March 1991							
	Under 1 year:		1 to 2 years:		Over 2 years:		Total	
	Number	Per cent. change	Number	Per cent. change	Number	Per cent. change	Number	Per cent. change
SHAs	11,504	15·7	1,431	0·0	521	−35·0	13,456	10·6
Total	834,511	7·2	79,496	−33·1	1,600	−96·9	915,607[1]	−3·5

[1]Based on provisional figures obtained from regions.

NHS Reforms

13. **Mr. Sims:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what criteria her Department uses in assessing the success of the implementation of the national health service reforms.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We measure the success of our health policies by the benefits that they are delivering to patients in terms of the improvement to the quality of service, reduction in waiting times, patient satisfaction and the overall improvement in the health of the nation.

Mr. Sims: Does my right hon. Friend consider that the fall in waiting times and the increase in the number of patients treated should be warmly welcomed? Has she noticed the change in the attitude of doctors and nurses towards the reforms in view of their demonstrable success? Does she think that it is about time that the Labour party changed its attitude?

Mrs. Bottomley: I heartily agree with the sentiments expressed by my hon. Friend. We have had a great deal of change in the health service recently. The results of those changes are already clear for all to see. I hope that the nurses and medical professionals will all work with us to ensure that we can build on those services.

Since being made Labour's health spokesman, the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) has constantly made allegations about a hidden agenda, but he has been unable to prepare an agenda for himself. As the *Health Service Journal* commented only last week,

"Defeat has left the Opposition flat-footed and its health policies irrelevant."

It is time to build for the future and to build on the achievements in the service.

Mr. Flynn: An important part of the health reforms is health promotion. Can the Minister explain why Imperial Tobacco gave 2,000 poster sites to the Conservative party in the election campaign? Does not that show why the Government are in the pockets of the tobacco industry? Or will the right hon. Lady disprove that by moving a motion to support the European ban on tobacco advertising?

Mrs. Bottomley: We have seen another example of the way in which the Labour party constantly pursues vindictive vendettas. I have made the position quite clear. The fall in smoking in Britain has been greater than in any other country apart from the Netherlands. We have an effective system under the voluntary agreement. We do not support the subsidy for growing tobacco. We have maintained the price of tobacco and we do not have a nationalised tobacco industry. We should be judged on the result—a dramatic fall in smoking, which will continue—and not by the vindictive gimmicks of the Labour party.

PRIME MINISTER

Earth Summit

Q1. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Prime Minister what are the specific objectives of Her Majesty's Government at the Earth summit.

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): The Government's specific objectives for the Earth summit are signature of global conventions on climate change and biodiversity; a statement of principles on forests; a short "Rio declaration" of environment and development principles; a comprehensive action plan; and reinforcement of international institutions dealing with environment and development.

Mr. Hughes: As that was the Prime Minister's first parliamentary answer, will he make it his No. 1 priority this Session to tackle the global environmental crisis? Is he aware that the secret documents that we have seen contain proposals which amount to a watering down of the tough energy-saving commitment and replace specific targets with vague promises, and are to be put to the European Commission tomorrow? Will the Prime Minister ensure that, at the Earth summit and thereafter, tackling the global crisis will be his priority and that of his colleagues on the world stage?

The Prime Minister: This is an important conference—an important priority—and there is a great deal to be done. The political will is there, not just in this country but in countries around the world. It appears that the attendance at the Rio summit will be very high—and very high at Heads of Government level. I must emphasise that what is agreed at the conference is only the beginning of the work that needs to be done. Some people might set their expectations too high. There is bound to be a limited amount of success at Rio. There will be a good deal to be done subsequently in this country, in the European Community, and beyond.

Mr. Lester: If my right hon. Friend gets a chance to watch television, I am sure that in the past two or three days, and certainly this month, he has noticed the beginning of the one world '92 campaign, linking 66 nations' broadcasters throughout Europe as well as the general public in preliminary matters to the Rio conference. On 30 May, it will culminate in a day of action throughout Europe and the tree of life, for which I am sure he has signed his pledge. Will he support all the work that is being done to involve the public in this issue because, however much we feel that it is important, without general public support we shall never get anywhere?

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend. It needs a commitment by Governments, by which I mean Governments across the world. Little will be gained if

some contribute while many others do not. A great deal of commitment by individuals will also be necessary. This may be one of the areas of policy where it is often the individual driving the Government, rather than the reverse, in terms of commitment to the environment. I have little doubt that individuals in this country and beyond will commit themselves to these environmental and desirable aims.

Engagements

Q2. **Mr. Janner:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 12 May.

The Prime Minister: This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Janner: Will the right hon. Gentleman please tell the House the extent to which, in his own opinion, the Parliament of the United Kingdom should surrender sovereignty in the interests of European unity and what role he considers that a British monarch should play in influencing policy and opinion within the European Community?

The Prime Minister: Influencing policy and opinion in the European Community at a political level is a matter for the politicians. That has been a long-established tradition and it remains the position. The position of the sovereignty of this House is a matter which we have discussed on many occasions. The sovereignty of this House is not a matter that is up for grabs—that is perfectly clear. What we have said is that there are areas where we can pool decision making in the general interests of the whole of Europe and in those circumstances it is right to pool decision making, but perhaps one of the most essential parts of the Maastricht agreement was the agreement on subsidiarity —that things must be done on a national level when they can best be done at a national level.

Sir Anthony Grant: While recognising that miscarriages of justice are bound to take place from time to time and must be rectified, will my right hon. Friend confirm that there will be no weakening in the attitude of the Government, of the police or of the courts in the relentless battle against terrorism?

The Prime Minister: I am certainly happy to give my hon. Friend that assurance. Terrorism is one of the most wicked and evil problems faced by this Government and by Governments across the world. There will be no weakening in our determination to fight terrorism and no weakening in our determination to work with our European partners at a European level to fight terrorism.

Mr. Kinnock: As the Prime Minister rightly says that he wants to sweep away the cobwebs of secrecy, is that a principle that he will be applying to the financing of the Conservative party?

The Prime Minister: The financing of the Conservative party is not a matter for the right hon. Gentleman.

Q3. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 12 May.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Banks: What representations has the Prime Minister made to President Bush to get the pilots of the A10 tank busters to submit themselves to the inquiry into the deaths of the nine service men killed by the so-called——

Madam Speaker: Order. The matter with which the hon. Gentleman is dealing is sub judice. If he can rephrase his question, I will certainly hear him.

Mr. Banks: The Prime Minister will recall in principle terms that President Bush gave assurances to the parents of the service men who were killed that the pilots would come over here for examination. Will he tell us what representations he has made to ensure that President Bush carries out those assurances?

The Prime Minister: As I believe the House has been told on previous occasions, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence will be drawing the families' letters to the attention of Mr. Cheney, the United States Defence Secretary.

Mrs. Peacock: Now that my right hon. Friend has been returned to Downing street for a further five-year term, may I invite him—when he is planning his visits—to visit my constituency of Batley and Spen in Yorkshire where he will find much manufacturing prospering as it has been investing during the recession? He would be made most welcome on such a visit.

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for her invitation and it is certainly one which I shall hope to take up during the course of this Parliament. I share her view about the prospects for manufacturing industry and, in particular, for the new areas of manufacturing which have flourished so much in recent years and which are so often overlooked when people talk about manufacturing in the generality.

Q4. **Mr. Dunnachie:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 12 May.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Dunnachie: What pressure has the Prime Minister put on President Bush in relation to the British soldiers who were massacred in the friendly fire incident and to fulfil the promise to their relatives? Will he tell them why nothing has been done in that respect? What does he intend to do in the future to bring that sorry state of affairs to an end?

The Prime Minister: I responded to that point a few moments ago, as the hon. Gentleman and the House heard. The hon. Gentleman will be aware that United States officials have discussed the handling of the evidence with the coroner, who has made it clear that he accepted the United States decision not to provide witnesses. That matter has been raised at the highest level with the American Government and Defence Secretary.

Q5. **Mr. Gill:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 12 May.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Gill: As the first Conservative Member whose name appears on the Order Paper for the first Prime

Minister's Question Time of the new Parliament, may I convey the congratulations of all Conservative Members to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on leading our party to its unprecedented fourth election victory? Does my right hon. Friend not agree that his strongly anti-federalist stance was instrumental in securing that general election victory? In view of today's press reports, will he reassure the House that British sovereignty is not "insignificant"?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. As I said a few moments ago, decisions need to be taken as close to the citizen as possible. That was the principle of subsidiarity that we fought for and obtained in the negotiations at Maastricht. Where the nature of a problem requires a European response, we believe that it should have a European response. That was the balance that we struck, and I believe that it was the right balance.

Mr. Wigley: The Prime Minister has again emphasised the importance of the subsidiarity concept that decisions should be taken as close as possible to the people. How will that be applied to the people of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, or is it a principle which starts in Brussels and ends in London?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman knows that we are one United Kingdom and the Government are determined that we shall remain one United Kingdom.

Q6. **Mr. Quentin Davies:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 12 May.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Davies: Is my right hon. Friend aware of the enormous sense of pleasure, relief and hope in the future generated by our victory at the election under his leadership? *[Interruption.]* There are obviously some sour grapes on the Opposition side. Does my right hon. Friend agree that after another five years of Conservative Government, instead of this country's performance being measured by how fast we are catching up with Germany, for the first time in 100 years we shall be a model for others in respect of economic performance, enlightened administration of public services, and social peace and cohesion?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to my hon. Friend and I agree with him. We very much want wealth and welfare to go hand in hand, and I believe that the fear of the election of a Labour Government had been holding that back. Since polling day we have seen a dramatic change in the confidence of the markets and individuals. Share values have risen by about a seventh, sterling is up, and interest rates have been cut by a further ½ per cent., bringing us almost level with German rates for the first time in a quarter of a century. That is good news for British industry, for British investment and, over time, very good news for British employment prospects.

Mr. Cryer: As the Prime Minister is so complacent about British manufacturing industry and claims that there is much good news about, will he assure the House that he is not prepared in the GATT negotiations to sacrifice the textile industry to gain advantages on behalf of the farmers who have supported the Conservative party? Will he give an unqualified guarantee that he will fight to keep jobs in the British textile industry, as many thousands of jobs have been lost in the past years of Conservative rule? We want to keep that industry going in Bradford and elsewhere. Will he give that guarantee?

The Prime Minister: What I have never understood in the hon. Gentleman's remarks about manufacturing is why he and his colleagues are always so keen to assume that British manufacturing industry is failing, doing unwell and needs special assistance and special subsidies to survive. The reality is that the United Kingdom share of world trade in manufactures rose in 1991 for the third successive year. Right across the country we have seen growth in areas of manufacturing industry which did not show signs of growth in earlier years.

Q7. **Sir Thomas Arnold:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 12 May.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Sir Thomas Arnold: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the recent actions of Ofgas and Oftel to reduce prices still further show that the community charge has real teeth when it comes to protecting the interests of the consumer?

The Prime Minister: The work of Ofgas and Oftel goes right to the heart of the citizens charter. The principles of those two regulatory bodies are important and the citizens charter underlines our commitment to put the consumer first. The regulators have achieved significant price cuts. British Telecom's prices have been cut by 27 per cent. in real terms, British Gas has cut domestic prices and standing charges, and the regulator is demanding more cuts. The impact of the citizens charter will continue to put the citizen in the forefront of people's minds when state prices are determined.

Points of Order

3.30 pm

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Four years ago the House—or certain members of it—voted by a majority for the Single European Act, which surrendered certain powers to European institutions. At the time the House did not believe that it had surrendered powers over immigration policy or the working week. Those powers are being hijacked and the European Community is cheating over the way in which it is trying to use such powers.

There will shortly be a debate about the ratification of the Maastricht treaty and various papers have been deposited. You will have seen from a letter in *The Times* yesterday from Lord Bruce that the papers which have been deposited——

Madam Speaker: Order. I insist on points of order relating to me and all hon. Members must come directly to the point. We will have no letters to *The Times*. Hon. Members must refer to the Chair and to my responsibilities.

Mr. Marlow: Indeed, Madam Speaker, and it is an important responsibility. The implication is that the document placed before the House is complex and full of annotations. The issues involved are massive, but it will be difficult for hon. Members to understand the gravity of those issues from reading that piece of paper. The paper could be attached to the European Communities (Amendment) Bill as one paper, so that hon. Members would know what was involved in the new treaty from one reading. Will you use your offices to ensure that anything that comes before the House, before legislation, is clear because I can assure you that at the moment it is not?

Madam Speaker: Of course that is a matter for the Government, but I shall certainly use my good offices if I am able to do so.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I am sorry to have distressed you during Prime Minister's questions by causing you to intervene in what I was saying. Would you advise me and the House? The sub judice rule exists to ensure that nothing is said in the House which would prejudice someone's fair trial in court. I was not aware that an inquest was in the same category as a normal court of law hearing where someone was on trial. Will you clarify the position so that I do not make any further mistakes?

Madam Speaker: I would not want to mislead the hon. Gentleman and the House. I took a great deal of advice on the matter before coming to the Chair. I assure the hon. Gentleman that the matter was sub judice, otherwise I would not have interrupted.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Twice this afternoon the Prime Minister mentioned the concept of subsidiarity. Given the importance of that concept and the sovereignty of this place, will it be possible to allow the House to examine the concept of subsidiarity within the context of the United Kingdom Parliament in advance of the Maastricht debate?

Madam Speaker: That is a matter not for me but for business questions on Thursday, if the hon. Gentleman is lucky enough to catch my eye.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): Further to the point of order raised by the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks), may I, as a Member of Parliament who knows a family who lost a young man during the friendly fire incident, ask whether it will be possible for there to be a full debate on the issue in the House after the inquest, because the families are desperately keen to know the exact truth?

Madam Speaker: I understand the hon. Lady's anxiety, but as a long-standing Member she knows that that is a matter to raise with the Leader of the House at business questions.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Will you confirm that, if you so determine it, hon. Members can ask questions on any subject, whether or not it is before a court or an inquest, and that the sub judice rule is used only as a guide and a convenience? Will you confirm that this House has the right at all times, if it so determines and if the matter is of importance, to comment although the issue may be before a court?

Madam Speaker: The Speaker has a degree of discretion. The question arising concerned which witnesses were to be called, and that is where the sub judice rule comes in.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths (Edinburgh, South): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. As today a convicted killer escaped from Saughton prison in Edinburgh, and as yesterday a convicted killer escaped from Saughton prison, is it in order to ask the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, the hon. Member for Edinburgh, West (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton), to make a statement to the House?

Madam Speaker: That may well have been in order before noon, but it is certainly not in order at this time of day.

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South) *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Is the hon. Gentleman sure that he has a point of order that I can deal with?

Mr. Devlin: Yes. I do not want to take up the House's valuable time, Madam Speaker, but will you confirm for the guidance of all Members of the House that Ministers are responsible for the conduct of the Government but not for the conduct of extra-parliamentary bodies, whether they be political parties or other organisations with which they may be associated?

Madam Speaker: I cannot see why the hon. Gentleman wishes me to confirm that. I do not know what the point of order is for the Chair. Perhaps he will elucidate, and then I shall know what he is talking about.

Mr. Devlin: During Question Time the Leader of the Opposition asked the Prime Minister a question about the conduct of the Conservative party, for which my right hon. Friend is not answerable in this House. Will you confirm that, Madam Speaker?

Madam Speaker: In the cut and thrust of Question Time and debate there is often six of one and half a dozen of the other, and sometimes I have to turn a judicial deaf ear to what I hear coming from many quarters of the House.

Mr. Bruce Grocott (The Wrekin) *rose*——

Madam Speaker: We have had enough points of order to deal with today and we should now proceed with the business. Has the point of order just occurred to the hon. Gentleman or has he been rising?

Mr. Grocott: It is further to the point of order of the hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Devlin).

Madam Speaker: No; I have dealt with that.

Orders of the Day

Debate on the Address

[Fifth Day]

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question [6 May],

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, as follows:

Most Gracious Sovereign,

We, Your Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled, beg leave to offer our humble thanks to Your Majesty for the Gracious Speech which Your Majesty has addressed to both Houses of Parliament.—*[Mr. Kenneth Baker.]*

Question again proposed.

Environment, Local Government and Education

Madam Speaker: Before I call the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) I must tell the House that I have selected the amendment in the name of the Leader of the Opposition and that, again, the Members wishing to speak are oversubscribed, so speeches between 7 pm and 9 pm will be time limited to 10 minutes.

3.37 pm

Mr. Bryan Gould (Dagenham): I beg to move, at the end of the Question, to add:

but humbly regret that the Gracious Speech contains no recognition of the proper role of local government and local democracy, no recognition of the scale of the housing crisis and no proposals to release local council capital receipts, no legislation to establish an Environmental Protection Agency and no measures to improve educational standards and opportunities, but instead represents a further series of measures to centralise power, weaken local democracy and extend privatisation which will undermine the quality and supply of local service provision and do nothing to fulfil the expectations raised by the Citizen's Charter.

Let me begin by offering my congratulations to you, Madam Speaker, on your richly deserved election to the Speakership of this House. You carry with you our highest hopes and confidence, and I should like to wish you every success in a long and successful Speakership.

Of all those with good reason to be dismayed by the outcome of the general election, local government has perhaps more reason than most to feel a sense of despair. The return of a Conservative Government means that more than a decade of unremitting hostility to local government from both Westminster and Whitehall is set to continue. Clearly, the Conservative party regards the public sector, not as a contributor to the national well-being, but as a constant drain on national resources, operating somewhere beyond the boundaries of the national economy, virtually a foreign, not to say an alien, territory.

There is no sense that the public sector has anything to contribute, no sense that its services are valued by those who depend on them or that it is a proper partner and support for the private sector. Instead, there has been nothing but antipathy not just to the public sector as a whole, but to local government in particular. That antipathy has meant a series of blows to local

government's powers, resources and morale, blows which for some authorities which proved to be unduly recalcitrant meant that they were simply abolished altogether. The blows, to the whole of local government, culminated in the disaster of the poll tax and the straitjacket of capping. The poll tax was in one sense a terrible mistake, but in another it was a deliberate act of malevolence which threatened the very existence, independence and autonomy of local government.

Those who have suffered from that unprecedented onslaught go far beyond the officers, councillors and work force who have dedicated their lives to local government. The real victims have been all those who depend on the services delivered by local government—the homeless, those waiting on swollen housing lists, those looking in vain for home helps, meals on wheels, nursery provision, those expecting decent schools for their children and those looking to local government to perform its traditional functions of guaranteeing clean air and freedom from pollution.

However, the damage has gone still further. It is the very concept of local government itself that has been the true victim of Tory hostility, and the whole of our democracy is the worse as a result. The sustained effort to undermine the independence of local government and to ignore the aspirations of the people of Scotland and Wales has meant that we are now the most centralised country in western Europe. A pluralistic system of government, in which a wide range of opinion could be represented, has given way to an elective dictatorship exercised from Whitehall and Westminster in which the winner takes all.

Local government itself has shown quite remarkable resilience and it is a considerable tribute to all those dedicated men and women that it has survived as well as it has done. However, it can hardly be surprising, in the face of that sustained attack from the Tories during the past decade, that the sense of the value of local government is now at a low ebb.

Over the past year or two, the Department of the Environment has suffered from what might be called the curse of the two Michaels. The first Michael, the previous Secretary of State for the Environment, was the great Heseltinian centraliser. He was the instigator of rate penalties, he was the inventor of urban development corporations, and he was the destroyer of the local authority housing programme. He is still at it—he has set up the urban renewal agency, designed to bypass local government, and appointed an unelected crony to run it for him. His one redeeming feature—his declared hostility to universal—poll tax capping did not survive his second stint at Marsham street. He quickly joined all those of his colleagues who endorsed what he once memorably described less than two years ago as an act of

"centralised power outside our experience."

Even the right hon. Gentleman can turn tail, or so it seems.

The second Michael, the ironically titled Minister for Local Government, was the arch defender of the poll tax. He was the man who told the Tory party conference that it would be a "rip-roaring success". He so supported the poll tax that he ensured that it lived on in the council tax.

The first Michael has gone off to the Department of Trade and Industry, where, no doubt, he will try to do for British industry what he very nearly did for local government—and, perhaps, that is the right way of putting it: he very nearly did for local government. It is doubtful whether local government could have survived another Heseltinian term at Marsham street. No wonder that the leaders of British industry are now running for cover.

The second Michael has gone off to the Treasury as Chief Secretary, where he will no doubt demonstrate the same skills at managing the public finances which enabled him to preside over the £19 billion loss to the taxpayer as a consequence of the poll tax debacle. He is hardly the obvious person to carry credibility when he tries to crack the whip over wasteful public expenditure.

With what a heartfelt sigh of relief must local government and the Department of the Environment have seen the departure of the two Michaels; but with what despair must the realisation have dawned that a third Michael had been installed in their place. Indeed, it now seems inevitable that the very term "a Michael" is destined to serve the same pejorative purpose as "Wally" and "Herbert" do in other contexts.

This third Michael is in many respects even worse news than his predecessors and homonyms. This, after all, is a man with a record. This is the man whol guided the poll tax legislation through the House and who still apparently is able to recall that experience without visibly blushing. This is the inventor of the system of standard spending assessments which the whole of local government now regards as hopelessly complicated, unfair and unworkable, and which the chairman of the Association of Metropolitan Authorities has even today urged the new Secretary of State to modify—a system which had the great and unexpected merit of being able to discern that more snow was likely to fall in the borough of Brent than in the wastes of Cumbria.

This is the man who demonstrated the same tact and sympathy for local government when he was at Marsham street as he went on to show to the trade unions when he went to the Department of Employment—the man who, through his opposition to the minimum wage, demonstrated his touching faith in the proposition that our economic salvation lay in having the worst paid hairdressers in Europe.

This is the man who counted it a success at the Department of Employment to preside, month in and month out for all but three of the 27 months that he served, over an increase in the unemployment total and an increase in the economic failure and human misery which that figure represented.

This is the man who now returns to the scene of the poll tax crime and threatens to kill off local government for good. When local government desperately needs a builder and healer, it has been saddled with a Secretary of State who could not telephone the speaking clock without picking a quarrel with it.

We can expect more of the same, yet even the new Secretary of State might quail when he discovers what his predecessors have thoughtfully bequeathed to him by way of a replacement for the poll tax. The poll tax was unfair and unworkable, and there is unlikely to be one Conservative Member who would dispute that simple assertion. But the council tax threatens to outdo the poll tax on both counts. It retains all the worst features of the poll tax—the unfairness, the head count and the need to keep a register—but it throws in for good measure the doubts and difficulties of a totally untried property tax compounded by a botched valuation process.

I predict that the council tax will be to this Government what the poll tax was to the last. The anger of all those who

[Mr. Bryan Gould]

must suffer it will be all the greater when they realise that the Conservatives have refused to learn the poll tax lessons.

Then there is the problem of reorganisation. Undaunted by past Tory failures, the new Secretary of State will apparently press on with the proposals he has inherited, proposals which will mean that local government will be plunged into chaos and unprecedented confusion as a local government commission trundles its way around the country in a leisurely and piecemeal fashion for perhaps 10 or 15 years. At any time, local government in some parts of the country will be expected to remain dual in structure, whereas in others it might become at some time in the future—or it might already have become in the recent past—unitary in structure.

The Opposition agree that a simpler and more accountable structure for local government is desirable. We support the idea of a commission which will consult widely and take into account the variety of local interests and needs. But we have the gravest misgivings about a process which is manifestly designed to allow a partisan Secretary of State to abolish Labour-controlled county authorities while preserving those under Tory control.

The new Secretary of State is hardly helped in his task of grappling with this nightmare by the fact that the lieutenant with whom he has been saddled is a Thatcherite ideologue. It is a matter for regret and surprise that that lieutenant is not beside the Secretary of State on the Treasury Bench this afternoon. The new Minister for Local Government and Inner Cities is an heir to that decade-long Thatcherite tradition of regarding local councils as outposts of rebellion that have to be subjugated rather than legitimate guardians of local democracy and pluralism. He is hardly likely to restrain a Secretary of State from pursuing that Government's vendetta against local government.

In case we are tempted too far into gloom, there is a little light relief at hand. There is always the Prime Minister and his citizens charter, which we are reliably informed is to be relaunched yet again. It has already had more relaunches and come-backs in one year than Frank Sinatra has had in a lifetime.

The problem with the citizens charter is that, having thought up the title, the Prime Minister's powers of invention deserted him. Perhaps that is why he has asked the right hon. Member for Bristol, West (Mr. Waldegrave), the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, to take responsibility for the matter. We are told that the right hon. Member for Bristol, West is not one who wears his learning lightly but is something of a philosopher. Just as Bishop Berkeley asserted that he could prove the existence of the tree in his garden even when he could not see it, so I have no doubt that the right hon. Gentleman will prove, at least to his own satisfaction, that the citizens charter really exists, even though no one else doubts that it remains stubbornly lodged in the Prime Minister's imagination.

Whether real or imagined, no citizens charter can possibly produce the better-quality services and the more effective remedies that are promised if, at the same time, the public sector is constantly reviled, starved of resources and told that its only future lies in it being privatised. The citizens charter will remain a diversion from the real task. The fact that it featured not at all in the recent election campaign shows just what the Prime Minister's colleagues really think of it. Until we have a Government who place a proper value on the public sector and on local government, the citizens charter will remain an ineffectual piece of paper.

I take the opportunity to affirm the Labour party's passionate belief that local government is essential to the efficient delivery of local services. It is essential to the accountability that local communities demand from Government. It is essential also as the properly pluralistic counterbalance to the overweening power of central Government. We shall do all in our power to sustain local government over the coming difficult years of continued Tory rule from Westminster.

It is not only local government that will suffer over the next four or five years. The Government's record on housing, education and the environment should alert us to what we should now expect in those areas. Housing is one of the most shameful failures on even this Government's blotchy record. Homelessness has soared, repossessions are at record levels, the housing market is in a slump, rents are being forced up by Government diktat, the number of houses built is the lowest in any peacetime decade this century, and the construction industry is in deep recession. Yet there is nothing in the Queen's Speech to suggest that the Government have the slightest intention of tackling any of these problems or have any inkling of their urgency.

There is not even a recognition of the absurdity of the restrictions imposed by Tory central Government on local authorities that have their own money by way of capital receipts, their own land, a clear housing need to meet and a clear political will to meet it. They are prevented by the Secretary of State, as they were by his predecessors, from building the houses that people so desperately need. This money does not have to be borrowed; it does not have to be raised by new taxation. It is money which already exists and which everyone in housing, in local government and in the construction industry agrees should be invested in meeting housing need. Only the Government remain outside that common-sense consensus.

There is nothing in the Queen's Speech to show that the Government recognise the pressing nature of the environmental problems that the country and the rest of the world face. The promise of a new environmental protection agency, the only constructive thing that the Prime Minister is ever known to have said on the subject of the environment, has been dashed by the publication of the Queen's Speech.

Mr. John Bowis (Battersea): Before the hon. Gentleman leaves the question of capital receipts, he will recall, as we do, that when the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) made his proposal, which the hon. Gentleman is repeating today, he was slapped down by the shadow Chancellor. Is the hon. Gentleman taking a slap at his right hon. and learned Friend, or has there been a change in Labour party policy?

Mr. Gould: If the hon. Gentleman has risen to his feet to defend an arcane Treasury rule which stands between common sense and the nonsense that we have to endure now, I recommend that he re-examines that rule so as to ensure that money which exists, which local authorities

want to spend on housing and for which there is a clear housing need is spent for that purpose under prudent conditions.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Would it not make much more sense to use the capital receipts to put roofs over the heads of the homeless than to bail out, as the Department of the Environment and the President of the Board of Trade are doing, a broken-backed Canadian company, run by the Reichmann brothers—Olympia and York? The Government intend to transfer large sums of taxpayers' money to that Maxwell-type company, which owes $12 billion to the banks. This tawdry Government would sooner bail out that corrupt organisation than allow Labour-controlled local authorities to build houses to put roofs over the heads of the homeless.

Mr. Gould: My hon. Friend makes an interesting point. It is quite remarkable that the white knight who appears to be riding to the rescue to help with the cash flow problems of Olympia and York is not only the same person who initiated the London Docklands development corporation and who invested so much of his reputation in its success; he also happens to be the recently departed Secretary of State of one Government Department and the current Secretary of State of another which are both apparently contemplating paying large sums in rent to Olympia and York for otherwise unlettable office space. My hon. Friend has done the House a service by bringing this issue to light this afternoon.

As I was saying, the Prime Minister's promise that we should have an environmental protection agency was dashed as soon as we saw the text of the Queen's Speech. The Bill to set up such an agency is significantly missing from the legislative programme. We are left by way of an environmental agenda for the new Secretary of State only with the familiar spectacle of a Secretary of State protesting his virtue in public on issues such as global warming but working behind the scenes to support a reactionary United States Administration whose main purpose seems to be to frustrate any effective action. The new Secretary of State will have to make a strong break from the limitations imposed by his predecessors if he is to establish his green credentials and pursue real achievement on the environmental agenda.

Mrs. Teresa Gorman (Billericay): Is the hon. Gentleman aware that the results being produced by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration as a result of satellite observations are casting serious doubt on the concept of global warming and that that is why the President of the United States is taking one step back from precipitous action and expenditure which could seriously damage the industries in his country?

Mr. Gould: I fear that the hon. Lady's outfit is the only green thing about her. The truth of the matter is that she and, perhaps, who knows, President Bush are members of a tiny minority which flies in the face of the overwhelming bulk of scientific evidence collected through the United Nations intergovernmental panel on climate change which shows beyond all doubt that we would be stupid in the interests not only of future generations but of our own generations if we were to ignore the precautionary principle and failed to give the environment the benefit of the doubt. The doubt is being extinguished day by day as we learn the lessons of global warming, ozone depletion and acid rain. It is regrettable that the hon. Lady should use her position on the Back Benches to deny what is now, I think, universally accepted by reputable scientists.

This is the Queen's Speech of a Government who have nothing to offer by way of new ideas and who have, therefore, fallen back on old prejudices and bad habits. It is the Queen's Speech of a Government who are incapable of learning lessons from past failures, who are prepared to contemplate with a stony face and an equally stony heart the misery of the victims of their policies, who continue to give priority to their own ideological shackles rather than the human plight of the homeless and the disadvantaged.

Life will be very hard during the next four years under this Government for all those whose interests are habitually ignored by the Government. Life will be hard for those who look to good quality public services for the homes and schools on which they and their families depend. Life will be hard for those who want to see a vibrant local government and a truly effective democracy.

We pledge ourselves in opposition to fight the fight for all those people and to assure them that our aim is nothing less than a Labour Government who, unlike this Government, will defend the interests of those people and will serve the whole community.

4.2 pm

The Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Michael Howard): I add my welcome, Madam Speaker, to the many that you have already received on being elected to your great office. It is with some relief that I have discovered that as from 1 April responsibility for your accommodation passed from the Property Services Agency, and, therefore, my Department, to the House of Commons Commission. In the unlikely event of there being any complaints, I emphasise that it is to the commission that they should henceforth be addressed.

My delight at speaking from this Dispatch Box for the first time as Secretary of State for the Environment is enhanced by the presence on the Opposition Front Bench of the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould). It is a long time since we last crossed swords in the House, but I have never ceased to admire the subtlety with which the hon. Gentleman: has manoeuvred through the delicate shifts in position that he has been seeking to make during the past few weeks.

In the early hours of Friday morning, after the local election results were known, the hon. Gentleman excelled himself. Desperately looking for crumbs of comfort, he said of his party's performance, "At least it gives us a low base from which to recover in a few years' time." I make this offer to the hon. Gentleman: I am fully prepared to work with him over the years to help him and his party to achieve a lower and lower base from which they can seek to make ever more spectacular recoveries in the dim and distant never-never land.

We heard an interesting speech from the hon. Gentleman this afternoon. I am not sure quite how much good it will do his leadership bid. The most significant point in it came when he totally evaded the pertinent question on capital receipts put to him by my hon. Friend the Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis). We know of the sharp difference in view which emerged during the general election campaign between the hon. Gentleman's team and the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) who, fortuitously, has just left the Chamber.

[Mr. Michael Howard]

I am prepared to give the hon. Member for Dagenham another opportunity to answer my hon. Friend's question, or to answer an even simpler question. Given that the Opposition amendment places such emphasis on capital receipts, why is it that it is not signed by the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East? Is that difference of view still continuing, or is it that the right hon. and learned Gentleman cannot bring himself to put pen to paper next to his rival for the Labour leadership—the hon. Member for Dagenham? I shall be happy to give way to the hon. Gentleman, to allow him to answer any of those questions.

The Gracious Speech emphasised the importance that the Government attach to the protection of our environment. No issue is more crucial to our future. It needs to be addressed at all levels—local, national, regional and global. Within the Government, the responsibility for addressing environmental issues, at all levels, rests with my Department. That is no accident of administration. The decision to bring those elements of the machinery of government together in one Department was taken in 1970, during the run-up to the Stockholm conference. That decision has stood the test of time.

In exercising those responsibilities, I shall be guided by three principles—opportunity, responsibility and partnership. When our debate was opened last week, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister spoke of the need to maintain a country in which everyone may realise his or her aspirations—everyone. There can be no forgotten few —nor can there be any exclusion zone in our inner cities or on any of our housing estates; no no-go areas where the writ of opportunity does not run.

This evening, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education will talk about the opportunity for people to choose where to send their children to school. We must also extend and enhance the opportunity for people to choose and own their homes; to gain access to effective public services, efficiently delivered; and to enjoy a local neighbourhood environment that is not blighted by a pall of neglect—neglect that has often been the hallmark of so many of the inner city areas controlled by councils run by the Labour party.

As we offer opportunity, we must encourage responsibility. Ultimately, those whose aspirations remain unrealised—and those who are not always able to formulate their aspirations—must accept some responsibility themselves. Government can provide the framework—the people themselves must make the most of the opportunities that arise.

That is one of the elements of the partnership that we seek to provide: partnership between public and private sectors, central and local government, and the business community and voluntary organisations—above all, partnership with the people who have felt left out of opportunity, and whom we must bring within its reach.

We cannot and we shall not accept as permanent features of our society the degradation that has disfigured the physical environment and the very lives of so many of our fellow citizens.

Mr. David Blunkett (Sheffield, Brightside): I am surprised that the Secretary of State does not choke on his own words. Perhaps he will explain how local communities are meant to exercise responsibility when 86 per cent. of their local services funding comes direct from the Department of the Environment and the remaining 14 per cent. is also determined by the Government, through the capping regime. How are those who were elected last Thursday expected to exercise their responsibilities and to provide opportunities when the Secretary of State determines their finance, legislation and virtually every action?

Mr. Howard: If the hon. Gentleman will show a little more patience, he will have an answer to his question. It is astonishing that Labour now seeks to criticise the Government for the proportion of local government spending that is provided from central funds. Year after year, when that proportion was diminishing, we were criticised for providing less money to local government from central funds. Now that we have made a substantial increase in the proportion provided by central Government, we are being criticised on precisely those grounds. The Opposition had better at least start to get their act together, and introduce some semblance of consistency into their criticisms.

There is nothing inevitable about the decline of the inner city. Just as we can all be sucked into a cycle of decline, so too it is possible to create a virtuous circle leading to opportunity and prosperity. Much has already been done. Through the establishment of urban development corporations, task forces, city action teams, housing action trusts and programmes such as estate action and city challenge, we have made a difference. More needs to be done, however: not by instructing the people who live in such areas what to do; not by taking decisions away from local people; but by involving, engaging and empowering them—by giving the people more power and responsibility over their own lives. That is at the heart of our approach.

The programme outlined in the Gracious Speech represents only the first stage in a series of measures that will extend throughout the current Parliament. The housing, land and urban development legislation represents another important step forward in the Government's strategy for revitalising the inner cities. Its centrepiece is the proposal for the creation of an urban regeneration agency. I am delighted that Peter Walker has agreed to become the agency's first chairman if Parliament approves the measure. The fact that a man of his stature has been chosen is a clear signal of the great importance that the Government attach to the work that the agency will carry out.

Ms. Mildred Gordon (Bow and Poplar): Does the Secretary of State agree that the 10 years of operation of the enterprise zone in my constituency should be subjected to an inquiry and evaluation? Nearly £3 billion of public funds has gone into the area in the form of direct and indirect subsidies, but fewer than 3,000 jobs have been created. My constituents have been subjected to the delights of the totally inefficient docklands light railway, and, now, to the tottering financial tower of Canary wharf. Should not an evaluation be carried out to see whether we have been given value for money?

Mr. Howard: I do not think that many people would recognise the figures provided by the hon. Lady. Many more jobs have been created than the number that she gave. If she wishes to make any assessment of the value that is attached to enterprise zones, she need only talk to people in all parts of the country—including those in

Labour-controlled local authorities—who are only too enthusiastic about the establishment of enterprise zones in their areas. I do not think that the hon. Lady's view of enterprise zones would obtain universal or general support.

Mr. Skinner: Can we get one or two things straight? Olympia and York—that busted flush of a company, now $12 billion in debt—is now looking for a lifeline. Through the Secretary of State and the President of the Board of Trade, the Government are going to hand out a lifeline to a company that is gasping for financial breath.

I want an assurance from the Secretary of State today that the Government will not hand out any taxpayers' money to Olympia and York by transferring offices to Canary wharf. If they do, they should be surcharged, just as any Labour authority would be surcharged for spending an excessive amount. It is high time that the Government came clean, because the affair stinks to high heaven.

Mr. Howard: I can give the hon. Gentleman the assurance that any decison made by my Department, or by any other Department, about the relocation of civil servants will be made on strict value-for-money grounds. We have been advised that the best value for money that is currently available can be found in docklands—not necessarily on Canary wharf, but in docklands—and we are looking for accommodation there; but, as I have said, our decision will be made on strict value-for-money grounds. If the hon. Gentleman's request for an assurance was at all serious, he would recognise that such an assurance has now been given.

Mr. Gould: The House will have listened with great attention and not a little unease to the Secretary of State's weasel words. Will he confirm what I imagine he meant to convey but did not have the courage to make explicit—that his Department is looking for office space in docklands and that it is negotiating with Olympia and York to rent office accommodation from that company? If the answer to that question is yes, or even if it is not quite a "yes", will he enlighten us as to which other Government Departments are contemplating a similar relocation?

Mr. Howard: There is absolutely no mystery about this matter. Everybody knows that the building which is occupied by my Department in Marsham street is to be demolished—a decision of my predecessor which I enthusiastically support and endorse. I do not know anybody who has the misfortune to work in that building who has any doubts about it. That means that we have to look for accommodation for a large number of people who at present work in Marsham street. We shall make our decision on the basis of the best value for money available, and no other consideration. We are at present considering a number of offers of accommodation that have been made to us, including offers of accommodation elsewhere than at Canary wharf and other than that owned by Olympia and York, but the properties on offer certainly include some owned by Olympia and York. We shall look at all those offers and make our decision on a strict value-for-money basis.

Mr. Gould: I am grateful to the Secretary of State for at least carrying us to the point where we now know that one of the offers being considered is that made by Olympia and York for accommodation at Canary wharf. The Secretary of State has said several times that the real consideration will be value for money. However, he must surely also take into account the whole question of administrative efficiency and the location of a Government Department close to the other centres of power in Whitehall.

Is the Secretary of State saying that for the purposes of locating his Department at Canary wharf—one of the offers that he is contemplating—he is prepared to divide his Department so that a substantial number of people go off to docklands while, presumably, he and his ministerial colleagues and senior civil servants remain here in Westminster? If that is what is being contemplated, why does he not say now that the whole business is too inconvenient and cumbersome, that docklands is not an appropriate location for a Government Department and that he will be looking for accommodation here in Westminster? Why is he not prepared to take that view?

Mr. Howard: The hon. Gentleman ought to ponder for a moment before he makes so crass an intervention as that. It has been part of Government policy for years that civil servants should be relocated from Westminster. The hon. Gentleman has just intervened to make a point about the administrative inconvenience of split Departments. The Department in which I served until a month ago, the Department of Employment, has many civil servants in Sheffield. I thought that that approach was supported by the Labour party and that Labour Members of Parliament with Sheffield constituencies were keen for that to continue. Does the Labour party now propose that we can communicate with people in Sheffield from Westminster but that we could not communicate with people in docklands? What an absurd proposition. One minute the hon. Member for Bow and Poplar (Ms. Gordon) gets up and protests that there are not enough jobs in docklands and the next minute the hon. Member for Dagenham gets up and says that all of them should be kept in Westminster. What a shambles. What an utter disgrace. What utter rubbish and nonsense comes from the Opposition Front Bench.

Ms. Gordon: Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Howard: No, I do not intend to give way again.

I intend to refer now to the urban regeneration agency which we shall put in place. The case for the creation of the agency is crystal clear. There are about 150,000 acres of vacant land in English urban areas, about half in public ownership. Not all of this is usable, but about 65,000 acres have previously been developed—an area five times the annual change from agricultural to urban use in England.

Dereliction, fragmented ownership, lack of information to owners and poor site conditions and access often mean that that land is difficult to market. But it presents great opportunities, once the potential has been unlocked. The time has now come to unlock this potential and seize these opportunities. I have no doubt that the agency will have the capacity to improve enormously the environment of the people living in many parts of our inner cities. It will bring new housing, new jobs and new hope to the people who live there.

The agency will bring together existing programmes for the development of land and enable them to be much more effectively focused. It will work in partnership with local authorities and the private sector to provide them with a single contact point. It will be able to give grants to them to bridge the gap between development costs and resale value. It will also be able to develop land itself.

[Mr. Howard]

I want the agency to work closely with local authorities. I hope that they will regard it as a source of expertise and capacity to help them realise the potential of their inner cities. The people who live in our inner cities are their most important resource. I want those local people to feel that the agency is working to create new opportunities for them.

Mr. Blunkett: Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Mr. Howard: I have given way far too often and I must press on.

That is why the agency will work closely with the training and enterprise councils to ensure that as many local people as possible obtain jobs in the construction phase and during the later commercial use of the land.

Mr. Blunkett *rose*——

Mr. Howard: I shall give way for the last time.

Mr. Blunkett: This is the first opportunity that the House has had to question the Secretary of State and his Ministers on the urban regeneration agency and it is the first opportunity that we have had to ask questions about things such as where the grants to which the Secretary of State referred will come from. From which existing heading are the grants to be diverted? Are the development corporations, the enterprise zones and the plethora of other measures to be subsumed under the urban regeneration agency?

Mr. Howard: The hon. Gentleman will have many opportunities, commencing tomorrow, to ask detailed questions about the agency. The existing urban development corporations will not be brought within the ambit of the agency. However, the agency will be able to focus much more precisely, effectively and in a targeted way many of the funds that we presently use in our efforts to regenerate the inner cities.

Mr. Anthony Steen (South Hams): As my right hon. and learned Friend will know, I have been campaigning for about 15 years—*[Interruption.]*—or longer for the release of vacant public land and I welcome the agency. It is one of the best things that I have heard about for a long time. Will my right hon. and learned Friend explain to the House whether the agency will confiscate public land or market it? Will it be able to give value to the public authorities for the land that it takes? Will its operations apply to private land, because a great deal of private land is vacant, dormant and derelict?

Mr. Howard: The agency will have marketing powers, it will be able to give value for the value for the land that it acquires and it will have powers of compulsory acquisition. I hope that I have answered all the pertinent points put by my hon. Friend, whose long interest in this matter—I shall not become involved in the precise period over which it has extended—I recognise and have welcomed.

Mr. Henry Bellingham (Norfolk, North-West): I have some derelict land in my constituency, but it is contaminated. Is there any plan to bring forward the contaminated land register, which is hanging like a sword of Damocles over a great deal of land?

Mr. Howard: Derelict land grant is and will continue to be available. I hope that it will assist my hon. Friend in dealing with the problem in his constituency.

The Bill will also provide new rights and opportunities to both council and private tenants. As the right to buy has so convincingly demonstrated, one important consequence of giving people more say over their own lives is an improvement in the most local environment of all—the property in which people live and its immediate surroundings. That in turn raises the morale of everyone living there.

We have been convinced for some time that a large number of council tenants would like to have the benefit of home ownership but cannot afford the financial commitment. That is why we set up pilot rent-to-mortgage schemes in Scotland, Wales, Basildon and Milton Keynes. The response has been encouraging. In our manifesto, we promised to extend this opportunity to the whole country. Council tenants will be given a new right to buy a stake in their homes for no more than they currently pay in rent. They will be able to increase their stake whenever they wish, moving gradually to full ownership.

I very much hope that the Labour party will not repeat the mistake that it made in 1980 in opposing the right to buy. It will be up to individual tenants to decide whether they wish to take up this new opportunity, and what possible objection can there be to giving them the chance to say yes or no, unless of course Labour Members still have a wish, rooted in political dogma, to see them remaining council tenants for ever.

We want to extend to long leaseholders the opportunity of full ownership and independence from landlords. I pay tribute to the powerful advocacy of my hon. Friends the Members for Westminster, North (Sir J. Wheeler) and for Kensington (Mr. Fishburn), who deserve much credit for championing the cause of so many of their constituents.

The Bill will give most long leaseholders of flats the collective right to buy the freehold of their block at market price. Those not eligible will instead be able to buy a renewed long lease, again at market price. We considered the existing rateable value restrictions on the enfranchisement of leasehold houses and concluded that there was no logical reason for retaining them. They will therefore be abolished.

The Bill does not neglect those who wish to remain as council tenants. The existing right-to-repair scheme, introduced in 1980, has proved too cumbersome and complicated. The Bill gives tenants a straightforward right to get repairs done privately and send councils the bill where councils fail to carry them out within a reasonable time. I hope that that will be widely welcomed on both sides of the House.

Mr. Clive Betts (Sheffield, Attercliffe): Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Howard: I am sorry. I have given way many times and must get on.

I hope, too, that it will be widely accepted that when we change the rights of tenants in the ways that I have described, and the rights of parents in the ways that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education will describe later in the debate, we are not attacking local

government. It should be the servant of its citizens, not the promoter of its own interests. It has, and will continue to have, a vital role in spending about £40 billion a year. But that role should be an enabling role. There are many ways in which the local services that people need can be delivered. Local management of schools is one example. Competitive tendering ensures a choice of providers. Free from the responsibility of running a large work force, local authorities can concentrate on ensuring that local people get a high quality service. */Interruption./* Exactly. Effective monitoring of standards is essential. That task is made easier for local authorities if they are not providing the service themselves.

I understand the revolution in attitudes that is required of local authorities to fulfil such a role, but the importance of local government does not, and should not, flow from the extent to which it provides services direct to the public. There is no reason why a local council should not take great pride in a job well done, whether or not its work force carried it out—indeed, even if its work force did not do so.

If that enabling role is to be discharged effectively, it is essential that local government should be responsive, that it should not be remote from those whom it seeks to serve and that there should be clarity about its responsibilities. That is why we are reviewing its structure. The objective of the review will be to find the structure that is the best for each part of the country—the structure that most closely reflects the views and needs of the people for whose benefit local government exists.

It is right that cost-effectiveness should be an important consideration. In that light, I expect to see a move towards more unitary authorities, but I have no blueprint. I see no reason why there should not be, and every reason why there should be, diversity. Local government should see the review as a challenge rather than a threat. It is up to individual local authorities to make the case to their communities for a particular form of structure. The best way in which they can do so is by demonstrating efficiency and quality of service. I hope that local government acts in that spirit.

I hope, more generally, that we shall see a new partnership between central and local government. In the past, that relationship has not always been one of total harmony. I dare say that it will not be possible to avoid controversy altogether in the future, but I hope that we can keep it to a minimum.

The very first people I asked to see were the leaders of the local authority associations. I have suggested—and they have agreed—that we should meet informally on a regular basis. I hope that we shall be able to work together in the interests of the people whom we have been elected to serve.

My Department has responsibilities which touch on the quality of our environment at all levels—local, national, regional and global. I have set out how the proposals in the Gracious Speech will help to improve the quality of our environment at the most local level of all—people's homes and their immediate neighbourhood—but we need to address those issues at all levels and we need to make sure that we do so in the right context. Any serious attempt to improve environmental standards needs investment. If we are to invest we must earn, and if we are to earn—as a nation and as a planet—we must be successful economic managers.

The economy and the environment are not on opposite ends of a see-saw, with one able to rise only at the expense of the other. They are interdependent. We can create a high quality environment only if we build a high quality economy. The key is sustainable growth and that is what we must achieve.

This is a Government whose words are a prelude to action, not a substitute for action. Barely a single month has passed since we were re-elected, yet in that short time we have already announced new commitments of our own on climate change, helped to persuade the Americans to make comparable commitments, played a central role in the final round of the negotiations on the climate change convention in New York and committed $1 million to the international effort to support the non-governmental side of the earth summit.

The earth summit, which will take place in Rio de Janeiro next month, is a unique opportunity and it must not be squandered. That is why my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister was the first national leader to make a firm commitment to attend. That is why we have now made clear our own intention to return our emissions of carbon dioxide to 1990 levels by the year 2000. That is why we have made it clear that, provided others play their part, we are prepared to commit new and additional resources to replenish the global environment facility.

We believe that the earth summit marks the opening of a new phase in the environment and development debates.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Mr. Howard: No, I cannot give way.

No conference, whatever its success, solves problems; it simply charts the course. It is what happens afterwards that really matters. In taking on the presidency of the European Community immediately after the earth summit, we will have a unique opportunity to get the follow-up to Rio off to a good start. We have clear and ambitious goals and we shall continue our policies to improve the quality of our national environment.

Britain's first ever White Paper on environmental policy, "This Common Inheritance", puts us among only four or five nations in the world which have produced a comprehensive policy on the environment. One of its central accomplishments was to set up a rigorous system for monitoring and reviewing on an annual basis the development of our environmental strategy. We have already published one report on the implementation of that strategy. In October, we shall publish a second report and we shall continue to publish reports every year. In addition, we shall be publishing in the autumn a statistical report on the environment, enabling everyone to monitor for himself or herself any improvements—or deterioration—that may take place.

We are examining the results of our consultation process on the shape of the environment agency and will shortly announce our preferred option. Drafting of the Bill will then proceed so that we can take immediate advantage of the earliest legislative opportunity. Meanwhile, the National Rivers Authority and Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution, which the Government established, will continue their excellent work of preventing pollution of the environment.

Protecting the environment and fostering sustainable development are not tasks only for Government. Many others have a part to play—business men, local authorities, scientists and the voluntary sector—and that is

[Mr. Howard]

why we have sought to involve them more closely in the development of our environmental policy through the Advisory Committee on Business and the Environment and similar groups and by involving them in our delegations to international meetings. However, it is the ordinary citizen and consumer who have perhaps the most important part to play, for, ultimately, the fate of our environment—locally and for the planet as a whole—rests on the individual choices that we all make. It is the duty of Government to provide a clear and comprehensive framework of law within which those choices can be made and to build powerful institutions to insist on the implementation of those laws.

No Government could possibly claim to have done all that was needed to protect or improve the environment, but I am confident that we have put the United Kingdom on a trajectory of constant effort and achievement in improving environmental standards. Care for the environment will be in the forefront of all our policies. I pay tribute to the work of my predecessors. I take up the torch with enthusiasm.

4.34 pm

Ms. Anne Campbell (Cambridge): I congratulate you most warmly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on your appointment. I wish first to refer to Sir Robert Rhodes James, who was my immediate predecessor as Member for Cambridge. He was well known for his enlightened views on higher education and for his excellence as a political historian and biographer. He championed the cause of students and was unafraid to oppose the policies of his Government when his conscience dictated. He was a courteous man who helped many people in difficulties, and he will be remembered as a man of integrity.

I suppose that many right hon. and hon. Members believe that they know the constituency of Cambridge. Many will recall hazy memories of their student lives in Cambridge: rolling lawns, high tables, political games in the union debating chamber, garden parties, punting to Grantchester,

"And is there honey still for tea?"

Judging by the condition of many hon. Members, there still is—and much more besides.

There is another side to Cambridge, however, about which hon. Members will know little from their student days. For many of my constituents, the harsh reality of Cambridge is a city with rising unemployment, chronic housing shortages, and poverty just below the surface. Increasing numbers of young people sleep rough and many old people live in fear of being unable to pay their bills. Students are being driven out of further and higher education by inadequate financial support. Single parents are denied grants for basic necessities. Nearly 17,000 households in Cambridge are in receipt of income support, including 5,400 pensioners and 2,500 single-parent families. One in four households in Cambridge is in receipt of some kind of means-tested benefit.

Cambridge has a low wage economy with at least one in 10 of the work force covered by the wages councils, on minimum hourly rates of between £2·66 and £3·06. Many of the people who make the beds, clean the rooms and serve the meals of future Cabinet Ministers are paid pitiful wages—how well they serve those people in their youth, and how quickly they are forgotten once university life is left behind.

The Queen's Speech acknowledges the existence of poverty in foreign parts, but, judging from their record, the Government will do precious little about that—and their programme for this Session of Parliament fails even to recognise the existence of poverty in this country. Are the Government so ashamed of the poverty that their policies have created that they dare not admit that there is poverty in our land? Do they intend to do nothing about the social fund even though they are aware that the resources allocated to the fund are totally inadequate?

In Cambridge, 70 per cent. of high priority applications to the social fund are turned down because of the meagre cash limit on the fund. Families with children, as well as pensioners and homeless people, continue to have claims for essential items such as sleeping bags and winter coats turned down by the Cambridge benefits office. Last year, the local district manager of the social fund had an application for an increase in funds turned down without any proper reason. This year, the local manager—whose area includes the Prime Minister's constituency—is again pessimistic, believing that his pleas for more funds will fall on deaf ears.

The Government are imposing severe financial hardship on increasing numbers of students. Bit by bit, the Government have eaten away at student financial support. By failing to increase grants in line with inflation throughout the 1980s, and by introducing top-up loans, the Government have made students into a new group of debtors. Through loss of entitlement to housing benefit and income support, the Government have made survival virtually impossible for many students. Then they abolished the vacation hardship allowance, causing poverty among students on an unprecedented scale. Their measures hit students in areas such as Cambridge—which has high rents—particularly hard, and there is worse to come.

The Government's failure to increase funding for institutions of higher education in Cambridge in line with inflation has meant that many colleges are making up the shortfall by swingeing rent increases which students have no new resources to pay. A number of colleges in Cambridge are already planning to increase room rents by 25 per cent. in real terms in the next two to three years.

The result of all those measures has been an increasing drop-out rate from institutions of higher education, owing to financial hardship. The introduction of the so-called access fund has been totally inadequate to counteract the devastating effects of the Government's other policies on higher education. However, it is not only the drop-out rate which gives cause for concern, but also the welfare of students, who are desperately trying to continue their studies against all odds.

In December 1991, a student from Homerton college in Cambridge was hospitalised owing to an infection of the liver, kidneys and intestines. In probing the source of the infection, the general practitioner was appalled at the conditions in which the student was living. There was no central heating, there were damp walls and the student had clearly not been eating adequately. The senior tutor at Homerton college has written that the situation uncovered by the GP was fairly typical of many of his students—what an indictment of Government policy that is.

What do the Government intend to do about poverty wages? Far from eliminating them, it is suggested that the Government will make the situation even worse by abolishing the wages councils, which at least prevented the inadequate rates of pay in many industries from falling even lower. The Low Pay Unit has estimated that the floor for pay after the abolition of the wages councils could be as low as £2 per hour. Is that really an acceptable level of reward for work in a civilised society?

The Government's low wages policy has created a poverty trap for so many families. Last year I took up the case of a father of five with a mortgage to pay who had lost his job. He found a new post, which paid £2·66 per hour —a net £95 per week. After paying mortgage interest and receiving child benefit and family credit, he would have been left with £42 to feed, clothe and support his family. Understandably, the man did not take the job because with income support and child benefit he previously received £138·50 per week and the Department of Social Security paid his mortgage interest. However, because he refused the job, his unemployment benefit was stopped for 20 weeks. What kind of encouragement to seek employment is that?

The poverty trap does not exist only for the unemployed. Many pensioners who are just above the income support level find it hard to survive. They have been especially hard hit by the poll tax and by the effects of privatising the water industry. Water rates in Cambridge have raced ahead of inflation. Since the abolition of water rate rebates in 1988, average bills in Cambridge have increased by 72 per cent. to £208. That particularly affects single pensioners living alone. The secretary of the Office of Water Services, Ofwat, eastern customer services committee has recently expressed concern that pensioners are going without food so that they can pay their bills.

The Government have no plans to tackle the problems of poverty in our country. Government Ministers use the language of equality, a classless society, a nation at ease with itself, to hide the fact that their policies are creating an ever more divided and unequal society. Their words are new-speak designed to enable the Government to avoid facing up to the truth.

I come to the House from a constituency where the Labour party was established 80 years ago, founded on the principles of social justice and equality. And how greatly our society needs those guiding principles today. I am the third Labour Member of Parliament for Cambridge, and the first woman Member. I follow in the footsteps of two men of high principle, Leslie Symonds, who was elected in 1945, and Robert Davies, who was elected in 1966 and whose political career was tragically cut short by his death in 1968. At his funeral Mr. Stan Newens, then Member for Epping, said:

"Robert Davies saw the Labour movement as a crusade for a new and better society, and he devoted himself to it without counting the cost—which was eventually his life. Any community owes a great debt to men like Robert, and his humanity, tolerance, self-sacrifice and devotion to others was a vital contribution to the Labour movement, Cambridge affairs and British politics."

No Labour Member of Parliament could wish for a finer epitaph.

I shall serve all the people of Cambridge and my country to the best of my ability, but I make no apology for bias towards the underprivileged. Cambridge elected a Labour Member of Parliament because we recognised the other side of the city of Cambridge, which the Government chose to ignore. We sought to understand the problems of the underprivileged and to reach out to them through our campaigning on the doorstep and by working on their behalf.

I feel enormously proud to have been entrusted to represent the people of Cambridge. I am equally dismayed that we should have a Government who care so little about social justice, but Labour has never underestimated the scale of the task necessary to build a fairer society. Although we are disappointed at the result of the general election, we do not give up—there are too many people in our society whose future welfare depends on us even to contemplate such a course of action. Not least among those are many of my constituents. After 24 years without effective representation, at last they have a voice.

4.46 pm

Mr. Terence L. Higgins (Worthing): First, I congratulate Madam Speaker on her election to her high office and wish her every success in the many difficult decisions which she will have to make while presiding over our affairs. Secondly, may I congratulate you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and wish you well in the Chair.

Thirdly, it is a great pleasure to congratulate the hon. Member for Cambridge (Ms. Campbell) on her maiden speech. She paid a generous tribute to her predecessor, Mr. Robert Rhodes James, whom many of us in the House held in the highest regard. She referred to his integrity and his distinction as an historian. Indeed, he made an important contribution to the work of the House and her kind remarks in that respect are greatly appreciated. The convention that maiden speeches should be uncontroversial is perhaps more honoured in the breach than in the observance nowadays, but I think that the House will recognise the hon. Lady's strength of feeling on the social issues to which she referred, and we shall look forward to hearing her on many future occasions.

Perhaps it is appropriate on the first Queen's Speech of a new Parliament to take stock. The status of the House has not changed greatly during the past quarter of a century, but clearly considerable changes may come into prospect since on the one hand the House is subject to claims for devolution of power to various parts of the United Kingdom, while on the other it faces the danger of a transfer of powers to European institutions. That combination may mean that the nature of the House may change in future years, perhaps in the not-too-distant future.

Therefore, I was much reassured by the speech on the Loyal Address by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, when he made clear his position on devolution and on Europe. It is reassuring that the outcome of the Maastricht negotiations was so successful from Britain's point of view. The fact that we obtained an opt-out clause which met this country's requirements was satisfactory, not least with regard to control over fiscal policy. Indeed, it would seem that many other European countries and Heads of State elsewhere are rather sorry that they did not follow our advice. However, the fact that we wrote our own opt-out clause gave us some discretion which we would not have had if there had been a general opt-out clause. In all events, that is important. As my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State will recognise, the principle of subsidiarity is extremely important for

[Mr. Terence L. Higgins]

environmental matters. On the one hand there is often a case for a European approach to protecting the environment, but on the other some environmental issues should be decided in the United Kingdom and not in Brussels or elsewhere in Europe.

There has been some debate in the press today about the diversity of parliamentary systems. I hope that as we come to assume the Presidency of the European Community we shall seek to extend to European affairs some of the undoubted advantages of this House of Commons, with regard not only to budgetary discipline, but to the control of public expenditure. The fact that we have a Public Accounts Committee and a Comptroller and Auditor General that do that should be emulated in a European context. Each year we debate the report of the Court of Auditors, yet absolutely nothing is done about the criticisms that it makes of European expenditure. I hope that during our Presidency we shall take up that point strongly.

I welcome the statements in the Gracious Speech about the open government initiative. An increase in openness and a reduction in secrecy are important and are closely linked to accountability. Over the past decade or so we have made a considerable improvement in the level of accountability of the Government to this House through the introduction of the departmental Select Committees. As the hon. Member for Cambridge and other new Members will soon discover, it is difficult at Question Time to pin down a Minister because the subject changes from moment to moment. The moment one thinks that one has pinned down a Minister, the subject changes. Similarly, it is difficult to pin down a Minister when he or she replies to a debate because of the confrontational situation. The departmental Select Committee system is of tremendous importance because it is quite a different matter for a Minister to appear for two hours in front of an all-party Committee. Therefore, it is very important that those Committees should be set up with the least possible delay.

At the end of the previous Parliament the last action of the Liaison Committee, which I had the privilege of chairing, was to instruct me to write to the leaders of all political parties in the House to remind them of the Committee's resolution which read:

> "That the Committee of Selection in the next Parliament should take full account of the view expressed by the Procedure Committee of Session 1989-90 that the process of nominating members of select committees should be completed within 30 sitting days after the meeting of a new Parliament, should proceed as a matter of urgency to place before the House its nominations for the membership of select committees and in particular should not feel bound to wait until the appointment of the last junior Opposition spokesman before submitting names to the House."

It is important that we should proceed with the nomination of Select Committees at the earliest possible moment.

In 1983 there was a delay from 15 June to 14 December and in 1987 from 11 June to 2 December before the Select Committees were set up. In the first case there were 66 to 69 sitting days and in the second 49 to 55 sitting days before they were all set up. It would be wrong if we did not set them up before the summer recess. If the Committees do not meet before then, the Clerks and advisers cannot get to work on the programme, and it would be nearly six months before the Committees were established and working following the resumption of the House in this new Parliament. That is why speed is important.

As I was Chairman of the Liaison Committee on the two previous occasions, I do not underestimate the difficulties of the negotiations that will arise. The resolution referred to the Opposition Front Bench. It should be possible to reach agreement on that because the number of individuals concerned must be small, which will prevent any unnecessary delay.

There are further difficult issues—for example, the participation of the minority parties and the chairmanship of the Committees. If the system is to have credibility, it is extremely important that there should be a number of Chairmen from both sides of the House. That is an essential part of the system. Problems are caused by the tradition, now firmly established, that the Committees should mirror the construction of the Departments. There has been no significant change to the Department of the Environment, but there have been changes in the structure of other Departments, not least with regard to the citizens charter and to sport and other related matters. We need to ensure that the Committee structure reflects those changes if the Committees are to monitor effectively the issues to be debated. I hope that we can make significant progress in that respect.

There are further considerations to be taken into account with regard to the European Committees. Those established in the previous Parliament did not work effectively. They were too few and did not have the expertise necessary to scrutinise effectively what has been going on in Europe and to report back to the Floor of the House. I hope that we can reconsider my earlier suggestion that we should have a sub-committee of the existing departmental Committees which have expertise and co-opt on to it other Members from the Floor of the House who have a particular interest in European affairs. It is difficult to man all the Committees in terms of pure numbers, so if we operate as I have described the House will be better at holding the Government and European Community organisations to account.

Those are important issues for Back Benchers from a parliamentary point of view. It is up to Back Benchers to bring pressure to bear so that they fulfil their responsibilities in this matter without delay. Otherwise, a large part of this Parliament will go by when the Government are not called to account in detail on individual matters.

Finally, there has been a great deal of talk about the nature of the present Government and the policy of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. I see him within the tradition of the late Iain Macleod, under whom I served my apprenticeship: extremely tough and rigorous on economic affairs but with a strong social concern for the everyday problems of individuals. The policies set out in the Gracious Speech reflect that. He comes to office at a time when it is tremendously important that Britain should be able to give a lead not only in European but in world affairs. Leaders across the world, from President Mitterrand in France to Mr. Kohl in Germany, Mr. Bush in the United States and the premier of Japan, are not in a happy position. I believe that we, as a British Government and a British Parliament, led by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, have an opportunity to play the role on the world stage which the House has traditionally regarded as a high priority.

I congratulate the Government on the content of the Queen's Speech, and I look forward to seeing the legislation come before the House.

4.59 pm

Mr. Don Foster (Bath): I am grateful for this opportunity to speak in the House for the first time, but I am equally grateful to the electors of Bath for giving me the opportunity to do so. I hope that right hon. and hon. Members do not think me disingenuous if I begin by paying tribute to my predecessor, Mr. Chris Patten, for whom I have considerable regard. I wish him and his family well when he takes up his new post as Governor of Hong Kong. He will bring to that task his considerable political and intellectual skills.

Chris Patten represented Bath for 13 years, and recent letters to the local evening paper, the *Bath and West Evening Chronicle*, clearly demonstrate that the electors of Bath held him in high regard. Even those who strongly disagreed with the policies that he supported acknowledge that he was a hard-working constituency Member of Parliament. In that regard, I recognise that it will be a tall order to follow him. Talking of tall orders, I understand that Chris Patten is likely to follow the precedent set by Madam Speaker, who has declined to wear the traditional wig. I understand that Mr. Patten is seriously considering rejecting the tall funny hat with the feathers on top when he takes up his new position.

The recent election was a busy period in Bath for visits from those on the Government Front Bench. We even saw the Prime Minister in Bath, but, on that occasion, he was without his soap box. On the other hand, my supporters were mainly from another place. I will long remember one of them who came with me on a bus trip through the centre of the city, who spoke through a loudspeaker urging the people of Bath to "Vote Don Foster. Vote Christian Democrat." No doubt that was an advance warning of how Liberal Democrat Members are likely to vote in the debate on the Maastricht agreement.

My constituency is a beautiful city. It is the only World Heritage site in Britain which is a complete parliamentary constituency, an honour which it shares with only Florence and Rome. Bath has the finest rugby union side in Britain, the finest musical festival, glorious architecture and wonderful people.

In June 1979, in his maiden speech, Chris Patten said:

"Bath is not a museum piece. It is an extremely busy city, although not quite as busy as we would like following the rise in unemployment in the last few years. It depends a great deal for its prosperity on a number of fine engineering firms."—[*Official Report*, 14 June 1979; Vol. 968, c. 720.]

Sadly, 13 years later, Bath is still not quite as busy as we would like following further recent rises in unemployment and many of the fine engineering firms to which Chris Patten referred are no more. Like many shops and other small businesses, they closed during the recession, often because of the twin attacks from the uniform business rate and high rents. I urge the Government to review rapidly the way that they support small businesses in particular.

Right hon. and hon. Members should be aware that beneath the facade of Georgian elegance Bath has the same problems as those associated with all cities in this country. We too have rising levels of homelessness, increasing unemployment, congested streets with significant traffic problems and ever-rising rates of crime, but the police are deprived of the resources that they need to tackle the problems.

Many people in Bath have suffered badly because of the collapse of those firms that formed part of the empire of the late Robert Maxwell. Maxwell pensioners have seen the promised rewards of a lifetime's work vanish in a cloud of deception, theft and financial jiggery-pokery. I, and my constituents, urge the Government to take quick and decisive action to relieve the misery and distress caused to Maxwell pensioners and to end the uncertainty that they face.

Education is another issue that is of considerable concern to my constituents. I congratulate the right hon. Gentleman on his appointment as Secretary of State for Education. As I speak, school governing bodies in my constituency are having to face up to how they will cope with cuts in their education budgets. Those cuts have been imposed because of Avon county council's need to reduce its education budget as a means of trying to avoid poll tax capping. In some cases those cuts will result in cuts in the numbers of teachers and, certainly, a reduction in the quality of education provided to pupils. That is in marked contrast to the Government's pledge in the Gracious Speech to

"continue to work to raise standards at all levels of education".

Such a pledge can be met only if it is supported by the necessary targeted increases in investment in education and training. Whatever the merits of the Government's claim to have increased expenditure on education, it is clear to Liberal Democrat Members at least that the current level of investment is inadequate to meet current need let alone any planned changes.

That view is clearly supported by many people in this country, and it was during the general election when the poll showed that three-quarters of the electorate approved of Liberal Democrat proposals to increase investment in education and training by £2 billion, even if that meant a 1p increase in taxation.

A nation lives and dies by its human resources. Properly educated and trained, Britain's citizens are our greatest asset. Britain spends less as a proportion of gross domestic product on education than many of our industrial competitors, including France, America, Ireland and even Malaysia. If we are to catch up with our competitors and partners, we must become what we are capable of becoming—one of the most highly educated and highly skilled societies in the world.

Education is about more than economic prosperity. Education liberates while ignorance enslaves. Education widens horizons and enlarges choice. Education enables everyone, regardless of age, sex, background or ability, to realise their unique potential. Wise expenditure on education represents a nation's investment in its own future. Funding for education and training must be further increased and I and my constituents will welcome any Government moves in this direction.

In the Gracious Speech the Government offer a Bill to extend choice and diversity in education. But what choice is currently on offer? Schools must choose between sacking teachers and doing without books, colleges must choose between decent accommodation and up-to-date equipment and universities between overcrowded lecture

[Mr. Don Foster]

theatres and empty bank accounts. Eighteen-year-olds must choose between forgoing higher education and starting their careers under the burden of debt.

The Government, rightly in our view, recognised that education and training needed reform, but the speed, complexity and the number of changes have left teachers and lecturers suffering from innovation fatigue. Meanwhile, parents are increasingly bewildered by the apparent emergence of a two-tier system of education. The time has come for the Government to stop and listen to the people of Bath and to people throughout the country. If they are serious about giving real choice to parents and students, they must recognise the problems that their legislation has created. It is vital that the new Secretary of State for Education restores the democratic process of engaging in wide and genuine consultation before any further changes are introduced.

5.10 pm

Mr. Cranley Onslow (Woking): I wish at the outset to congratulate the new occupants of the Chair. I hope that we shall not cause them too much trouble in the coming Session. It is not only a duty but a pleasure to congratulate the hon. Member for Bath (Mr. Foster) on an eloquent speech, delivered with great poise. We look forward to hearing from him in the future, even if we shall not necessarily agree with what he says on those occasions, let alone on this one.

Hon. Members will have agreed with the hon. Gentleman in at least two respects, the first being the tribute he paid to Bath Rugby Union club, which many of us have watched with great pleasure. The second and more important was his tribute to his predecessor, and he rightly couched his remarks in generous terms. I am sure that I am not alone in thinking that when we ask who were the real heroes of the last general election, we shall agree that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and Chris Patten share the honours—if not equally, then Chris Patten must still take a large share of the credit for the result of the election. He goes to Hong Kong to take up a challenging new job with the good wishes of all on these Benches, and I have no doubt that he will succeed well in the difficult task that he is about to undertake.

The difficult task that hon. Members face today involves trying to cram a quart into a pint pot, in view of the shortage of time, so I hope that I shall be forgiven for making only one point about education, the subject being taken with the environment. I welcome what the Gracious Speech says about education, in particular about extending choice and diversity. The motion standing in the names of Opposition Front-Bench spokesmen is churlish when it says that no measures exist "to improve educational standards and opportunities". That shows how out of touch they are. If they do not believe, as I do, that grant-maintained schools have vastly increased standards and opportunities in education, they should spend more time talking to parents at schools.

In my constituency—the same must be true throughout the country—the grant-maintained system is proving an enormous success, as my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said in his speech on the Loyal Address. I have a word of caution for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education, whom I welcome to his new responsibilities. I hope we may have his assurance that there will be no asset stripping by local education authorities in such a way that it will become more difficult for independent managements in schools to maximise the opportunities that lie ahead. I extend that beyond schools, to sixth form colleges, and I hope that my right hon. Friend will find time when he replies to the debate to deal with that aspect.

The Secretary of State for Education (Mr. John Patten): It may be convenient if I answer my right hon. Friend's question now with a resounding yes. We shall do everything we can to prevent local authorities from asset stripping before schools go grant-maintained and to prevent them from getting in the way of the democratic right of parents voting in favour of grant-maintained status.

Mr. Onslow: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for that response. I assure the House that I had not given him prior notice of the question, which makes the response even more welcome.

Time permits me to raise only two matters concerning the environment. The first may seem parochial but it is a problem that my constituents share with many other people in Britain—the vexed question of gipsy sites. Many hon. Members will agree that the present situation is fundamentally unsatisfactory. It brings local government into discredit when difficult problems are handled in such a way as to undermine confidence in the equity of the system under which local authorities operate.

It is generally conceded that the Caravan Sites Act 1968 needs fundamental review and revision. It is clear that what has happened in the parish of Ash, at one end of my constituency, and in the ward of Knaphill, at the other, has not matched the aspirations of my constituents. They are entitled to have their rights fully recognised, to have the opportunity to put their points of view and to have those views debated in public and at length.

There is scope for the Minister who is responsible for the citizens charter to look urgently at the way that the system is working. The present position is unsatisfactory. There seems to be a race to get approval under the Act for registration so that the problem can be unloaded on to the next-door authority. That leads to many relevant factors, including the social impact of gipsy sites and the devaluation aspect, not receiving consideration.

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): Does my right hon. Friend agree that further problems are created when unauthorised gipsy encampments move into boroughs and it takes a long time before they can be moved on? That issue must be considered in the review of the legislation to which he referred.

Mr. Onslow: I agree with my hon. Friend, and if I were not trying to make a short speech I would expand my remarks to cover the inadequacies of the Public Order Act 1986. Many serious defects exist in the present law and I had hoped that at the beginning of the debate my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State would say whether a review was in progress and, if so, when it might be brought to its conclusion. I hope at least that in correspondence he will give me some encouragement, because increasingly many people are arguing for the substitution of unitary

authorities for county councils in dealing with these issues. We need more openness in dealing with the matter, with greater equity all round.

The second point on the environment to which I wish to refer requires me to declare my interest as a passionate angler, but as there are 3 million anglers in Britain, and most of them vote, hon. Members will agree that I need not apologise for raising the matter. Anglers are concerned about the environment pre-eminently because, if they are to pursue their sport, they need water of quality and quantity in which to fish. There is depressing daily evidence that that desirable situation is getting harder to satisfy. To a large extent, it is nobody's fault but the Almighty's. The Government cannot be blamed for the drought. As the Government have resisted the temptation to appoint a Minister who might be blamed, we cannot apportion the blame much further.

Even leaving the drought aside, I would not go so far as the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould), who seemed to blame the Government for failing to appoint an environment agency. I do not know what powers such an agency might have. Most of those who are familiar with the situation agree that much could be done, without rearranging the brass plates on the doors in Whitehall and elsewhere, to ensure that we have effective action to deal with a problem that is easily identified.

We do not need an environment agency to deal with the problem of rivers running dry because of excessive abstraction. The National Rivers Authority has powers, if it cares to use them, to limit and, if necessary, revoke abstraction licences and to move away from the policy that it seems to have adopted lately of treating abstraction licences on a first-come, first-served basis.

There is an urgent need for my right hon. Friend to talk to the chairman of the National Rivers Authority, Lord Crickhowell, and get from him a full report on the action that is to be taken to end the scandal of empty rivers. In Berkshire and Yorkshire—for example, in the Pang and Driffield Beck—nobody can fish because there is insufficient water. I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Boothferry (Mr. Davis) would echo that point if he were in a position to speak today.

In that context, will the Minister urgently consult the National Rivers Authority about the NRA's approach to the question of transferring water from one part of the United Kingdom to another? The NRA appears to have plans to use rivers as pipelines, regardless of the effect that that might have in transferring acidic water from one part of the country to alkaline rivers in another.

We must review the whole issue of the use of water, recognising that it is a scarce and precious resource. We must appreciate that rivers running with pure water are absolutely essential to the beauty of the countryside as well as to anglers who wish to fish in them.

There are subsidiary issues such as surfactants, foam-causing agents, and the menace, as many anglers see it, of the burning of orimulsion in power stations. Those are subjects on which I hope that the responsible Minister will produce full reports as soon as possible.

I am not anxious to speak at great length because I know that many others wish to contribute to the debate. I wish only to say that in the Gracious Speech we are rightly told that the value of the environment at home and abroad is something that the Government are pledged to defend. That statement is most welcome and I have no doubt that it will be honoured.

I welcome especially the initiative that has been taken by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister in relation to the Rio summit. In his speech in the address in reply to the Gracious Speech, my right hon. Friend stressed that we were seeking to give assistance to other parts of Europe, including that which we called eastern Europe, which is now emancipated. Many of us would judge it to be an environmental disaster area. A high priority—I believe that we are the best nation in Europe to discharge it—should be attached to making industrial emissions cleaner and to fighting against environmental pollution so as to bring a civilised environment to areas that have been devastated by years of communist industrial inefficiency. That is one area—my right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins) listed others—in which I believe that we are uniquely equipped and qualified to set the pace at both European and world level.

We have before us an excellent Gracious Speech. I welcome its contents and I believe that it bodes well for the future of the entire United Kingdom.

5.21 pm

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): I start by congratulating you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as other hon. Members have done, on your appointment. I also take the opportunity of congratulating Madam Speaker, who represents a constituency in the black country, the west midlands, on her appointment. Those who come from that part of the country derive great pleasure from the fact that Madam Speaker is a local Member.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridge (Ms. Campbell), who indeed made an eloquent maiden speech. Cambridge is fortunate to have such a Member. She is the third Labour Member, as she said, to represent the constituency, and its first female Member. She spoke eloquently indeed when describing the problems that faced her constituents. We heard an excellent maiden speech, too, from the hon. Member for Bath (Mr. Foster). Like my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridge, he spoke without the slightest sign of nervousness. I am sure that we shall hear both my hon. Friend and the hon. Gentleman speak on many occasions in future.

The right hon. Member for Woking (Mr. Onslow) is, of course, the chairman of the 1922 Committee. He said that we have before us an excellent Queen's Speech. Obviously, I do not believe anything of the sort.

Mr. Irvine Patnick (Lords Commissioner to the Treasury): The hon. Gentleman would not.

Mr. Winnick: Indeed. I have every justification for taking that view of the speech, which contains no mention of unemployment. There is not one word on that subject. Conservative Members may consider this to be old-fashioned, outdated and the rest, but I have not changed my view, any more than my Labour colleagues have, that unemployment casts an unacceptable blot on society and causes immense hardship.

Some of us had the privilege of listening to Merlyn Rees's final speech in the House, which he made shortly before the general election. He referred to the 1944 White Paper on employment, which was introduced by Ernest Bevin. It was accepted in that document that Government had a role in trying to ensure conditions of full employment.

[Mr. Winnick]

Unemployment—deprivation of the right to work—is bad enough in itself but it is even worse that so many suffer prolonged periods of being unable to find a job. I do not gloat when Tory Members lose their seats and face employment difficulties. I lost my former seat in 1970 and in the conditions that then prevailed I was fortunate to find myself in employment within a week. I am glad, obviously, that Conservative Members lost their seats in the election and that there were many Labour gains, but I am sure that those Conservatives do not wish to be unemployed. It is understandable that they will make every possible effort to find work. They will find themselves in the same position as our constituents, who want to be able to work as well.

Church Action on Poverty sent all hon. Members this week a booklet on poverty. One of the contributors wrote about a part of Tyne and Wear where there is 84 per cent. unemployment. She stated that in some families two or three generations have never known what it is to be properly employed. The west midlands, too, have suffered in the second major recession, as we suffered in the early 1980s. Far too many people in the west midlands and in the black country are finding many problems in trying to obtain work.

People in their 50s, and even in their 40s, face an additional problem when they are told that they are too old to be taken on. When someone in his or her early 40s starts his or her political career in this place, no one considers him or her necessarily to be old. Far from it. I note that the Secretary of State for Education smiles. He should know that no doubt some of his constituents are in the position that I described. So many people are told even when they are in their 40s, let alone in their 50s, that they are too old to work. That is an additional problem when the economic climate is as harsh as it is at present.

In addition to that, there is what I can best describe as a growing underclass. In that group we see poverty, deprivation, lack of proper schooling, inadequate housing and poor opportunities at their worst. When the Government were elected in 1979, they made much of law and order. We know only too well that crime—in some instances serious crime—occurs frequently in many parts of the country. It is not only women who are greatly reluctant to go out after 7 pm in some areas. Does anyone doubt that the growing joblessness among young people is a factor in the crime statistics? Many school leavers find it impossible to obtain a permanent job.

It may be that after the Conservative election victory Ministers do not want to be warned by Labour Members, but I shall do so. I choose my words carefully. They will be playing with fire if effective steps are not taken to deal with the problems to which I referred. Often, those in the underclass, as I have described it, do not bother to vote. They feel alienated from the political scene. In some instances, they take the minimum amount of interest in public affairs. In percentage terms, the number of people in the underclass here, when set against the population as a whole, is not as great as that in the United States, but it is growing. That should cause the House much concern.

There are Conservative Members who believe that naked market forces have a solution to all problems. I assume that the majority of Ministers take that view. In more recent years, Americans have been told that government should be of the very minimum, but naked market forces have not been able to deal with the underclass and the poverty and destitution in that country. Surely what has happened in the United States is a warning to us to be extremely careful. It is a warning to the Government to recognise that there is a problem. Even if the warning comes from Labour Members, it is one that should be taken seriously.

The Secretary of State mentioned housing. It is ironic that almost all Labour Members, and, I imagine, a good number of Tory Members, receive more letters from constituents about this subject than about any other. Two thirds of those who come to my surgery come to talk about housing matters—mainly, although not entirely, about the need to be housed or rehoused.

I have made my position on the matter clear in a number of housing debates, and it is the same as that of all my colleagues. I accept that most people want to own their own property. If Tory Members want to believe their own propaganda about our supposed views on housing, they are entitled to do so. I have always said that as I own my own house—or am acquiring it from the building society—I could hardly wish to deprive others of the same opportunity. But the fact remains that a large minority, even in better conditions, cannot purchase, so rented and affordable rental accommodation is necessary.

For 13 years the Government have made it virtually impossible for local authorities to build. Not a single council house has gone up in my borough in that time. The Government have made no secret of the fact that they believe that local authorities no longer have a role in house building. That is dogma at its worst, and it causes a great deal of suffering and hardship. Young couples, perhaps with one child, tell me that they have to live with their in-laws or in a furnished room. I tell them that the Government say that they should be able to buy a place in the newly built housing in the private sector—whereupon they smile, knowing full well that they are not in a position to purchase. The only way such people stand any chance of acquiring adequate accommodation is through the local authority.

Housing waiting lists grow longer and longer. Why should people be penalised just because they cannot get a mortgage? The Government say that there are alternative forms of rented accommodation: the private sector. I accept that there is now more private rented accommodation—but without security, and at rents which people in need cannot afford.

I agree that housing associations have a role to play, but the figures are stark. In 1978, more than 20,500 new such dwellings were being built; that had fallen to 18,000 by 1990. I remind my colleagues of the figures for council house building. In 1978, the last full year of office for the Labour Government, there were well over 76,000 starts. In 1990, the number had fallen to 7,500. Is it any wonder that people find themselves in such a desperate housing plight?

There has been no response from the Government. The Minister said that he hopes that we will not oppose rents into mortgages, but that is not the issue. The real issue is providing accommodation for those who are desperately in need of housing and cannot afford to buy.

Understandably, Conservative Members will take much satisfaction from the fact that we have once again failed to win an election. Every Labour Member deeply regrets that, and we believe that our loss is the country's loss. We will not be in a position to implement what we wanted to do on housing, unemployment and pensions.

There will be the usual inquest on why we failed to win, and Conservative Members will take as much satisfaction as they like from that, too. We, however, can take some limited satisfaction from the fact that we made substantial gains and that 39 Tory Members lost their seats. With any luck, more of them will do so at the next election.

Labour Members have a duty and responsibility, as my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridge said, to express the hopes and aspirations of the people to whom I have referred—those in difficulty, those who know that their problems are likely to be raised in the House only by Labour Members. No Tory Member would raise those sorts of issues because Tory Members are not interested in them. As well as expressing the hopes and aspirations of those who are more fortunate, Labour Members will continue to do our job in this respect. We have firmly re-established ourselves as one of the two major parties, and however much Tory Members dislike the fact, we are an effective Opposition. We will continue to be one and we will do our utmost to ensure that when the next election comes we will be able to form a Government.

5.35 pm

Mr. Gyles Brandreth (City of Chester): I thank the Chair for allowing me this opportunity to make what is known as a maiden speech. Other maiden speeches have already taken us to Cambridge and Bath, and we have now reached another beautiful English city—Chester.

I have some reservations about the phrase "maiden speech" because it has an unfortunate sexist ring to it. As a rule I do not like sexist language, although I have begun to have some reservations about politically correct linguistics since the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) told me of the Christmas pantomime in his constituency which, for reasons of political correctness, was retitled, "Snow Green and the Seven Persons of Restricted Growth".

On these occasions, and in these early days, new Members are anxious to do the right thing. They all say, and it is true, that it is much like arriving at a new school —Westminster high, a political academy for students of somewhat mixed abilities. There does not appear to be any formal prospectus but, happily, my right hon. Friend the Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen) has published an admirable guide to the culture of the place and my hon. Friend the Member for Aldershot (Mr. Critchley) has published an equally fascinating guide to the subculture. Fortunately, Doorkeepers and the police are always on hand to point one in the right direction. I have not yet found my way to the hairdresser's or the rifle range, but doubtless my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) will sort me out in due course.

Sitting in the right place is also vital. On the day of Madam Speaker's memorable election, I found myself innocently drawn to the spot immediately behind the Prime Minister—instinctively drawn there, I now realise, by the assumption that it was the correct place for the Member for the City of Chester because that is exactly where my predecessor, Sir Peter Morrison, was wont to sit when he served the Prime Minister's illustrious predecessor so ably and loyally.

Loyalty is certainly a word that one associates with Sir Peter, a true gentleman who served his Prime Minister, his party, his constituents and his country with unswerving loyalty, energy and commitment during nearly 20 years in this House. Now that he has moved on to fresh fields and oil rigs new, I am sure that Members on both sides will join me in wishing him well for the future.

I have no doubt that Sir Peter will be keeping a discreet eye on my endeavours here, as will his distinguished predecessor, Sir Jack Temple and, indeed, his predecessor Sir Basil Nield——

Mr. Jack Straw (Blackburn): All still alive?

Mr. Brandreth: Yes indeed, all very much alive—we live a very long time in Chester because of the lovely water in the River Dee. Sir Basil was the Member of Parliament for Chester who pioneered what became the Adoption Act 1950, transforming for the better the lives of thousands of families throughout this country. On the day when we are invited to enter the ballot for private Members' Bills, that is a timely reminder to us newcomers of what a Back Bencher can achieve.

I understand that it is customary on these occasions to extol the virtues of one's constituency. For some Members, that may be something of a challenge because while the beauties and brilliance of Bradford, Brent or Bootle are very real, they are not necessarily as well known as they might be. For the fortunate Member for the City of Chester, it is different: the virtues of Chester are already celebrated.

Our city has been likened to the Conservative party —as modern as tomorrow, with a lot of time for yesterday. We combine the new—excellent communications, which will be even better with the electrification of the railway from Crewe to Holyhead, superb business parks, the best in British retailing—with the old: a unique walled city, a matchless heritage, a great cathedral now celebrating its 900th anniversary.

Chester has been justly described as the jewel in the crown of the north west. It is, in fact, a pearl in the oyster of England. If you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, have not yet been there, the Whitsun recess and the best hotels and guest houses in the land are waiting to welcome you.

In Chester, we have everything—including the Duke of Westminster, and I refer not to a public house but to a constituent with decided views, no doubt, on certain elements in the Gracious Speech, views that will be well worth listening to. I have found that all my constituents have views that are well worth listening to. They are articulate and concerned, and they are particularly concerned about the issues at the heart of this debate: local government, education and the environment. My constituents, particularly those fortunate to be elected last Thursday, are concerned that local government reforms should not erode local government accountability. They have especially charged me with attempting to unravel the impenetrable formula by which the standard spending assessment is arrived at and to explore why it is that a city such as Chester, with its special responsibilities towards our national heritage and its ever-growing contribution towards our national tourist industry, appears to be treated less fairly than it might.

My constituents—all of them—are concerned about education. They welcome local management of schools, diversity, choice, the raising of standards and the special emphasis that the Gracious Speech gives to teacher training. They recognise the need for reform, but they also recognise the additional burdens that reforms have laid upon governors and teachers alike.

[Mr. Brandreth]

In Chester, we are proud of our schools and colleges and pleased that no sooner had my right hon. Friend the new Secretary of State for Education hit his desk for the first time than he took the decision to save a threatened nursery school in Chester, sending out a clear signal that the Government recognise that the needs of the child and the voice of the parent are paramount and that nursery education—nursery schools as well as nursery units—has an increasingly important part to play in the educational life of our country.

My constituents—all of them—are concerned about the environment. They welcome the priority given to the environment in the Gracious Speech. They welcome the Prime Minister's initiative in being the first leader to commit himself to attending the earth summit in Rio. They salute the Government for securing the doubling of green belt land in the past decade and for recently supporting the green belt around Chester, not as an inflexible straitjacket but as a protective girdle which helps us to secure the unique nature of our city and encourages urban renewal rather than urban sprawl.

I particularly welcome the fact that the Gracious Speech specifically emphasises that environmental consequences are to be considered in every element of Government decision making. Where decisions are finely balanced, as they often will be, I sense that my constituents will want to see the environment given the benefit of the doubt.

As hon. Members will discover in the months ahead, my constituents have a great deal to say. That is why they welcome a listening Government—not a Government who pay lip service to the notion of listening and then carry on regardless, but a vital, thoughtful, progressive Government who regard listening carefully not as a weakness but as one of their greatest strengths.

5.43 pm

Mr. Seamus Mallon (Newry and Armagh): I pay tribute to the hon. Member for City of Chester (Mr. Brandreth) for an excellent maiden speech, delivered with great charm and eloquence. I do not know Chester—except for its race course, the memory of which is somewhat painful—but I congratulate him on his tour of that city and I wish him well in the House.

I also wish to congratulate you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on your appointment. For each of the previous four years I have spoken after you in the debate on the Queen's Speech. That was not to be this year, and I wish you well in your new post.

When I sought guidance from the Speaker's Office on the subject of each day's debate on the Queen's Speech, I was told that today one should nod in the direction of local government, education and the environment. I intend to do that, but in such a way as to focus on the issues as they affect the area that I represent in the north of Ireland, with all its tragedies. I shall start with local government, because we simply do not have any. It is difficult to speak about local government when we have none—when we are in a kind of limbo, detached in some ways, semi-detached in others, and without the luxury of being able to speak about the issues that most hon. Members will speak about today.

Historically, this is an important time for us in Northern Ireland. It is important in terms of the outside influences and developments which are coming to bear in a far-reaching and fundamental way. I believe that outside agencies in the European dimension, the EC and Maastricht, and the harnessing of diversity and differences in Europe will be a positive force rather than the confrontation that we have seen so often. I believe that that and many other outside influences will have a bearing on the creation of structures within the north of Ireland —the type of structures that will lead to an administrative system there which will give us a level playing field so that in debates such as this we can talk about local government as it exists rather than as a vacuum within our society.

As is obvious, we are presently involved in talks. It is a crucial and sensitive period and I do not want to speak about those talks. Suffice it to say one thing: we have a choice—either we can look for a neat, tidy little package which will take the Northern Ireland problem off the agenda here and out of people's minds, which will put it on the long finger, or we can look for a solution to the problems.

If we look for a neat little package, in 20 years' time some of us will be sitting here saying exactly the same things. It will be a futile waste of time. If we are looking for a solution to the problems, I believe that the time is right. The wind of change is blowing from outside and it is blowing inside in the desire for peace. It is blowing through the minds of many people as we approach the end of the century and we simply cannot allow this blight on our entire community, on our country to continue and go into a new century with the millstone of terrible violence and dissension around our necks. I only hope that the Government want a solution to the problem rather than a tidy little package which will suit their purposes in terms of their own presentation.

What happens in those talks does not happen in a vacuum. There is no ivory tower. The talks will be affected by what happens outside. Here I nod in the direction of the environment. One week ago, I stood outside an Army checkpoint in my constituency where yet another young British soldier had been blown to pieces by the Provisional IRA. On a previous occasion, I had asked that those static checkpoints be removed. Environmentally, they are horrendous, but that is immaterial when it comes to the cost in human life. Yet the Government persist with the daft, silly notion, which cannot be justified, that they should have those lookout posts there as sitting targets for the Provisional IRA and other paramilitary organisations.

Those people who know my prejudices and views may say that I am simply making that point in relation to Army activity in the north of Ireland. So be it. I will, however, quote someone whose opinion in that respect cannot be questioned. I refer to Brigadier Peter Morton, a former British Army commander in South Armagh, operations officer for Northern Ireland, and a Ministry of Defence planner. He is now retired, but he described lookout points in this way:

> "Bases, perched like Crusader castles showing the flag on every Ulster road and hillside, are sitting targets for the terrorists, to be reconnoitred in safety and attacked at leisure.
>
> They drain resources, sap the strength of the security forces, and place many lives needlessly in danger."

If I were the father of the young soldier who was killed a week ago, or of the young man who was killed some

months ago, I would seriously question the validity of the decision to retain those static checkpoints. I would ask for what it was that my son died.

The Minister of State said in an interview after the latest incident that the purpose of the lookouts is to reassure the community, but the view of the Army is that they do not fulfill any useful purpose. They do not fight terrorism, but are there to reassure some sections of the community. Is that worth the loss of one or two lives, or even more? I ask the Secretary of State for Education to draw that matter to the attention of his colleagues.

Mr. John Patten *indicated assent.*

Mr. Mallon: It is unacceptable for young lives to be endangered for no reason but to provide reassurance. The lookout post in the latest incident goes 60 feet into the earth, yet that post—one of 27 in my constituency—did not observe a digger 200 yards away as it loaded explosives on to a truck which was then sent along the railway line to the static checkpoint.

There is something radically wrong with a security policy that does not meet the situation. If lookout posts did not exist, many more soldiers would be available for patrols. One can be sure that the terrorists will not use roads where checkpoints are located. They will not be caught in that way. The element of surprise is all important, but that element has been removed in such a way that it puts lives at risk—to say nothing of the number of houses in the vicinity of that checkpoint which have been destroyed on two occasions. I visited the area a week ago, after the latest explosion, to see roofs, walls, and belongings gone. Yet there remains stubbornness, a refusal to be convinced, on the part of Government sources in the north of Ireland.

I refer next to the situation in County Fermanagh, which I will support with statistics. One full British Army battalion has for months been guarding the workmen who are building another static checkpoint. At the same time, the Irish army on the other side of the border devoted 76,000 man hours over three weeks to guarding that British Army battalion. That puts into perspective an aspect of security policy which cannot be defended.

I mentioned that there are 27 lookout posts in my constituency. Obviously, they see little and prevent nothing. Yet they are equipped with all kinds of surveillance equipment, which is giving cause for concern in terms of its effects on the environment and health. Does it give rise to a radiation problem? Is there a cancer-causing factor to consider? There is a growing belief among experts that such equipment poses a grave danger. I ask that that aspect also be investigated before it is too late. Such a suggestion may be poo-poohed, and cold water poured on it, but eventually sense will reign in the minds of those who make decisions.

My third nod is in the direction of education, in the hope that my remarks will help to inform those who are responsible for security in the north of Ireland. We have a serious problem with the IRA. The world knows it, we know it, and the Government know it. We have a serious problem also with other paramilitary groups—one of which has killed more people this year than the Provisionals have. It was responsible for the multiple murders committed at a bookmaker's in the Armagh road in Belfast, and for the shooting of the lady in a chemist's shop. The same group has been responsible for killings in the most horrific circumstances. I refer to the Ulster Defence Association.

The UDA uses a flag of convenience known as the Ulster Freedom Fighers and the Ulster Volunteer Force. It is one of the most horrific murder machines to be found anywhere. What is the official reaction? I hope that other right hon. and hon. Members will help me in this educational process. When asked in a "This Week" programme why the UDA is not banned, one of the present Ministers of State, Northern Ireland Office, the hon. Member for East Hampshire (Mr. Mates), replied:

> "It is from a part of the community that believe they are under threat—and if they believe they are under threat, within the law they may protest about this. They may associate. That's not to say that there aren't some rowdy, hooligan, and possible criminal elements."

Good heavens—the Minister talks of

"rowdy, hooligan, and possible criminal elements"

in referring to one of the most horrific murder gangs operating within these islands. Is it any wonder that year after year, when we see the tragedy of the north of Ireland and what the people there have to endure, we grow intensely angry at the failure of this Parliament and of the Government ever to solve that problem? But solve it we must.

If we are to make political progress, and to hold talks that will result in a successful resolution of the political problems, we must end some of the nonsenses in what is supposed to be a security policy for the north of Ireland. I take this opportunity again to draw attention to them, because if we do not get to grips with those issues, no one will be able to solve the political problems.

5.58 pm

Mr. James Pawsey (Rugby and Kenilworth): The hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon) spoke with considerable feeling about Northern Ireland, but he will forgive me if I do not follow him down the route that he signposted so well. He was, however, quite right to air in this debate the issues that he did.

My hon. Friend the Member for City of Chester (Mr. Brandreth) spoke with great eloquence and wit. I am sure that the House joins me in looking forward to hearing further contributions from him. I would say that even if I were not standing for re-election to the executive of the 1922 Committee later this week.

It is a great pleasure for me to see my right hon. Friend the new Secretary of State for Education in the Chamber. I have not the slightest doubt that he will bring a different view and a different style to his office and to our education debates, especially in comparison with his immediate predecessor. He is, however, the fifth Secretary of State whom I have seen during my period as chairman of the Back-Bench education committee. I am sure that he will agree that we now look forward to a considerable period of continuity, which, in my view, is much to be desired. I hope that my right hon. Friend enjoys a long, useful and happy stay in the Department.

I also welcome my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth) to his new post as Under-Secretary of State. He brings an original mind to our debates, and I look forward with considerable interest to hearing what he says about education.

For the Labour party, however, it is business as usual and opposition as usual. True, Labour Members entertained some high and misplaced ambitions to move to

[Mr. James Pawsey]

this side of the House, but for them that must be a pleasure deferred. They will have to reconcile themselves to the prospect of at least another five years in opposition. That will provide them with an opportunity to reconsider some of their education policies—for, eventually, even they will come to understand that the nation's parents want more choice and diversity in the nation's schools, and that a single type of school, no matter how well intentioned, cannot satisfy all the nation's children.

The present Government have not hesitated to make resources available for education. Last year, education spending in the United Kingdom rose by some 16 per cent.; this year, it will rise by a further 7 per cent. Both increases are well above inflation.

The Gracious Speech stated that the Government would

"continue to work to raise standards at all levels of education",

and that a Bill would be introduced

"to extend choice and diversity in education."

I welcome those proposals, and I want more schools to receive grant-maintained status, which will enable more local initiatives to flourish. Grant-maintained schools have a better understanding of the wishes, aspirations and needs of local parents and communities than, certainly, many local education authorities.

So often, LEAs have sought to impose a rigid education policy on differing schools in a wide geographical area —a policy sometimes determined more by political considerations than by education needs. I believe that the more that parents are involved in the running of schools and the education of their children, the better. Most parents naturally want the best for their children, and parents can help to drive forward the necessary improvement in the standard and quality of state education.

I hope that clusters of schools will apply for grant-maintained status. I hope that, for example, denominational secondary schools will, together with their feeder primaries, make the necessary applications, and I believe that if they do so they should be considered as single units. It will still be necessary, however, for each school to ballot parents and, if parents vote against grant-maintained status for a certain school, that school will not be able to form part of a cluster.

I also believe that it should be made much easier for some of the smaller primary schools to obtain grant-maintained status, especially those in rural areas. I support the concept of the village school—often very small and often providing, despite its size, very good education for local children. Clearly, it will be difficult for some small schools to consider grant-maintained status on their own, but, if they join neighbouring schools of similar size, such status should be possible and even desirable.

I have long argued that the principal attraction of grant-maintained status is not the additional funding received by the schools involved, but the greater independence that such schools enjoy. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] I am delighted to hear the assent of my hon. Friends.

Mr. Patten: And that of your right hon. Friend.

Mr. Pawsey: I am obliged to my right hon. Friend for that correction.

I am not arguing that all local education authorities stultify innovation and development. I believe, however, that since 1902, when they were first introduced, a number of changes have been made to education, society and, indeed, local government. I am far from certain whether LEAs in their present form are flexible enough to respond to the challenges of the late 20th century.

Despite the attractions of grant-maintained status, I am aware that not all schools will opt for that route. Some are likely to continue to work beneath the umbrella of the local education authority, in which event LEAs should be considerably modified. I believe that they will have to consider a new role—a role that may not be as positive as that which they currently enjoy. Moreover, some secondary schools, especially in the inner cities, may decide not to apply for grant-maintained status. I know that my right hon. Friend and his colleagues are particularly concerned about education problems in the inner cities. Although in some cases grant-maintained status may present a partial answer to some of those questions, it may be necessary to consider a substantial increase in the number of city technology colleges.

I am well aware of the benefits provided by CTCs. I know that they are able to offer a diversity and choice that are widely welcomed by the majority of parents. They are also able to improve substantially the quality of education available in the inner cities. I believe that CTCs can become bright beacons, lighting up the inner cities and giving real opportunities to children who, in so many other ways, are indeed deprived.

I am fully conscious that that suggestion has substantial financial implications; but the popularity of the existing CTCs, and the fact that they are always oversubscribed, demonstrate that they represent one method of improving education standards, particularly in the inner cities. Despite the best efforts of teachers and administrators, the comprehensive schools have not resolved the problems of inner-city education. They have now existed for 25 to 30 years, and some believe that that period has coincided with a gradual erosion of standards—again, particularly in some of the inner-city areas.

Despite what Opposition Members may believe, increased funding does not in itself resolve the problem. At least three additional elements are required to improve the quality and standard of state education. First, we need a lessening of the expensive local bureaucracy, which would allow more to be spent on individual schools and in the classroom. Secondly, we need greater independence for schools, with heads and governing bodies making decisions within the basic structure of the national curriculum. Thirdly, we need more involvement and interest on the part of parents, who, I believe, will become the great engine for change within our schools.

We also need a well-motivated and adequately paid teaching force. I have long argued, in the House and outside, that the majority of the nation's teachers are indeed dedicated both to their profession and to the children in their charge; but they must face some real problems, stemming, for example, from the growing number of single parent families and the break-up of the family unit. Teachers face an increasing lack of respect for authority, and a growing sense of indiscipline. All that adds to the problems of the classroom teacher.

I do not underestimate the problems or the challenge that teachers face, particularly in the inner cities, and I know that that issue very much concerns my right hon.

Friend the Secretary of State. As I said earlier, I urge my right hon. Friend to consider the possibility of expanding city technology colleges so that they may improve the quality of state education, particularly in our larger cities.

The Gracious Speech also referred to teacher training. I should certainly like students to spend more time in the class rather than the lecture room. The theory of education is, of course, important, but in my view it is secondary to the practicality of acquiring skills in teaching children in schools. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will understand the critical importance of ensuring that classroom practice takes place in those schools which have a good and deserved reputation for teaching and maintaining discipline, for those two aspects clearly go closely together.

Reference to teacher training takes me to another aspect and a different reference—dyslexia. Dyslexia exists. It is not a middle-class excuse for lazy sons or lazy daughters. I welcome the Department's initiatives in, first, giving guidance on how dyslexia should be identified and, secondly, when it is identified, taking the appropriate action to remedy the problems and difficulties. Teachers require special training both in the identification of dyslexia and in the teaching of dyslexic pupils. The frustration that must be experienced by children suffering from dyslexia is at times almost tangible.

I am pleased that the sum of £10 million so far has been made available over a period of three years for the reading recovery scheme, which helps to identify and remedy some of those difficulties. I am also pleased that the training of student primary teachers will include the consideration of dyslexia.

Mr. Bellingham: Can I pick my hon. Friend's brain on dyslexia, which is an extremely important subject? Does my hon. Friend agree that the time that it takes for children to be statemented in some local authorities is intolerable?

Mr. Pawsey: Yes, I agree with my hon. Friend. That, again, is a matter that is being closely looked at by the Department of Education. I hope that the statementing procedure will be streamlined to enable pupils suffering from dyslexia to be identified much sooner, to their advantage.

As for advanced education, I welcome the substantial increase in the number of young people who are now in advanced education. When we first came to office in 1979, the number of students in advanced education had slumped to about 700,000. Today, that figure is well over 1 million. To put it another way, in 1979 only one in eight of the target group was in advanced education. Today the figure is one in four and it is set to fall to one in three during the next few years.

That suggests to me two things: first, that there has been a substantial increase in the number of places in our colleges, polytechnics and universities to cater for the additional number of students and, secondly, that there has been an increase in the number of young people who are sufficiently well qualified to enter advanced education.

My main point regarding advanced education is a limited one. In particular, I draw my right hon. Friend's attention to the size of the access funds. When they were first introduced under the provisions of the Education Reform Act 1988, they amounted to £25 million. They have now been increased to £25·8 million, an amount that is great enough only to cover the increase in inflation. That very modest increase in funds has not kept pace with the substantial increase in student numbers. My firm belief is that we should uprate the access funds to cater for the substantial increase in student numbers. The access funds do much to reduce student hardship.

I am completely in favour of the introduction of student loans. I understand the reasons for the grant having been frozen, but those two reasons give added impetus to my view that we should look very hard at the size of the access funds and that there should be an increase in the amount of money provided. I hope that my right hon. Friend will refer to that point when he winds up the debate.

The Queen's Speech contains an exciting programme. I commend it wholeheartedly to all parts of the House.

6.14 pm

Mr. Robert Ainsworth (Coventry, North-East): I am grateful for the opportunity to make my first speech during this debate.

On these occasions it is customary to mention one's predecessor. Mr. John Hughes represented Coventry, North-East from 1987 until the recent general election. His convictions, and some of his methods of pursuing them, meant that he did not endear himself to everyone. However, he possessed a friendly and approachable way of dealing with his constituents. He certainly possessed tenacity, which he used on their behalf. Therefore, I pay tribute to him for his efforts on their behalf. I wish both him and his wife a peaceful and fulfilling retirement.

Many hon. Members know that Coventry, North-East was represented from 1974 to 1987 by Mr. George Park. I understand that he commanded considerable respect in this place. Hon. Members will be glad to hear that he commands similar respect in the constituency, where he is still very active in local community affairs. He is currently the chairman of the community health council in Coventry. He was very kind and helpful to me in the run-up to the general election. I thank both him and his wife for the help and kindness that they have shown me.

Coventry, North-East is a compact, urban constituency —an integral part of the city which, despite two devastating recessions, still employs more people in manufacturing than the national average. We have a complete mixture of housing: inner city areas, council estates and pleasant semi-suburban, owner-occupied areas. Despite its compact size, my constituency contains and is bordered by some valuable environments that deserve and, in large part, are receiving the protection that they need. In particular, I draw attention to Coombe Abbey park and the Sowe valley, which bring beautiful, natural countryside right up to and into the urban area.

Much work that is commendable has been done by the local authority, local conservationists and the Countryside Commission. They deserve our thanks and support, along with many other local groups that, through their hard work, do so much to maintain the quality of life in the area.

I am afraid, however, that we also have considerable problems in the constituency, as do all urban areas in this country. As I listened to some of the speeches yesterday and today, I found that I could hardly recognise the country that was being described by some Conservative Members. Our cities are in great danger. The trend, under current policies, is towards the position that has been

[Mr. Robert Ainsworth]

reached in the United States. If effective action is not taken, we shall see in our country what I call the doughnut effect: cities with great holes in the middle, where people do not go and dare not go.

The Queen's Speech does not address those problems. It is not just a question of policing, although that is important. In many cases, the police are stretched beyond belief. Crime, and the fear of crime, has now reached a level that is totally and absolutely unacceptable—this, after 13 years in power of the party that claims to be the party of law and order.

Security, hope and opportunity must be brought back to citizens living in those areas. Current urban policy is, in many cases, exacerbating and increasing the divisions. The grand scheme is favoured rather than housing and school repairs and we hear speeches such as that we have just heard from the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey).

I had not intended to talk about education, but I join the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth in his congratulations to the hon. Member for City of Chester (Mr. Brandreth) on his maiden speech. His accent, confidence and delivery and, although I am not an expert, probably his school tie, prove that he enjoyed a degree of choice in education. It showed in the way that he delivered his speech and he should be congratulated on his ability in that regard. However, in the constituency that I represent we do not have two or three cars per family to take the kids to school. Choice must mean a first-class local school offering first-class education within the area in which it is needed, and we certainly do not have that.

All those problems are of some importance but most important of all is the level of unemployment. In 1974, in his first speech in the House, Mr. George Park spoke of Coventry as being a great centre of manufacturing. He talked of his fears about the fact that British ideas were increasingly being developed abroad. His fears were well founded. We have seen great companies in our city, which were making a contribution towards the national economy and providing employment, going to the wall without any effective attempts to save them. The Queen's Speech talked of privatisation and other policies but said nothing about the regeneration and investment that will be necessary to stop that from continuing.

In 1987, Mr. John Hughes, in his first speech in the House, said that unemployment in the Foleshill ward of my constituency was 28 per cent. Now, five years later, it is 23 per cent. and increasing again. That level of unemployment destroys the fabric of communities and something must be done about it. It affects crime, education, the environment and health. Last year, the local health authority in Coventry did a statistical analysis of life expectancy levels in the different parts of Coventry. This is supposed to be a modern western country offering the best opportunities to all its citizens, yet it discovered a discrepancy in life expectancy levels of over seven years between the most affluent wards in the city and the most deprived. That is totally unacceptable. It discovered that the indicators of poor health followed almost completely the geographical pattern of unemployment levels.

We will not solve those problems by privatisation or anti-union legislation. We will not solve them by allowing hospitals to opt out or by any other of the policies that seem to be high on the agenda. We will not cure unemployment by simply supporting service industries, tourism and so on, important as they are. We must support manufacturing. We must make and sell things if they are to be successful.

I sat in the House yesterday listening to the plans for privatisation. During most of my life I have worked for Jaguar cars. That company was privatised while I was working there, and privatisation was probably far more appropriate there than in many of the proposed areas. However, it did not solve the problems in that company. Some directors became millionaires through lucrative share options, management bonuses, massive increases in salaries and cuts in taxation. They were handed down honours and so on. However, at the end of their reign, more than 4,000 people lost their jobs in the latest round of redundancies.

That is another proud Coventry company that is struggling to survive. The remaining work force, trade unions and the new management, who have at least brought a degree of professionalism in dealing with some of the problems, are working together to solve the problems and pull that company around. Privatisation did nothing for Jaguar and it will do nothing for our coal industry, apart from doing massive damage to our national interest.

Those are the issues that we should be addressing if we want to build a nation at peace with itself, where people of all races and both sexes can live in harmony and walk the streets in safety. Those are the issues that I shall be making my priority during my time in the House. I hope that if I can achieve just one thing, it will be to do some damage to the self-satisfied attitudes that appear to prevail in many parts of the House.

6.26 pm

Dr. Liam Fox (Woodspring): It is with no little pride and a great sense of honour that I speak for the first time in the House. I must immediately make known the debt that I feel to my constituents for sending me here. I hope that the faith that they have shown in me will not be misplaced over the years.

My constituency is Woodspring. Like many hon. Members, I have received several hundred letters since the election saying, "Congratulations on a wonderful Conservative result—by the way, where is Woodspring?" Those who have been in the House before will not be surprised to learn that the reason they have not heard the name of the constituency more often is that it was represented by Sir Paul Dean, who spent a record length of time as a Deputy Speaker. He gave record service both to the House and to the country. I am sure that hon. Members on both sides of the House join me in wishing him a happy retirement. After the length of time that he spent as Deputy Speaker, I am sure that he more than deserves it.

One of the questions that is of immense pertinence to Woodspring is its location. After the reorganisation of local government in 1974 the people of Woodspring, who had always belonged to north Somerset, found themselves in the much loathed county of Avon. The quicker Avon is abolished, the better—and the quicker my constituents are returned to Somerset, which is where they belong, the

happier they will be. Any Minister who can push that through quickly will be assured of a warm welcome when coming to speak in Woodspring.

Woodspring extends from Portishead, south of Bristol in the north-west of the constituency, through Clevedon, Nailsea, the Chew valley and down to Paulton, a town which has particular difficulties in the wake of the Robert Maxwell affair. Like many of my hon. Friends, I shall be trying my best to get a fair deal for those who have suffered from the scandalous behaviour of Robert Maxwell and what he has done to those poor people.

There are several other problems in the constituency, courtesy of Avon county, not least of which is shared by many of my hon. Friends, and that is the problem of traveller sites. We require urgent reform of the Caravan Sites Act 1968. It is becoming scandalous that law-abiding citizens who work hard to improve their community and their homes and surroundings should be discriminated against by a piece of legislation which gives priority to those who have no semblance of regard for local community and no community spirit, and who contribute nothing. I urge the Government to undertake a far-reaching and rapid reform of that legislation.

It is with some sadness that I speak in this debate. I am one of the many doctors who qualified under the Conservative Government and their far-reaching reforms of the health service. I was disappointed—indeed, disturbed—to find that the Opposition, who a few weeks ago told us that health was the single most important issue facing the electorate and that the election was a referendum on the NHS, chose not to debate the subject in the six days of debate on the Loyal Address. Why has it slipped so far down the Opposition's agenda? Could it be that they were rumbled during the election and were shown to be posturing in the extreme, with no solid policies to oppose the reforms that the Government have made? That is the case.

Conservatives do not need any lessons from our opponents about caring. We heard the word "caring" used today during health questions as though it were the exclusive preserve of the Labour party. As a junior doctor and a medical student during the health workers' strike, organised by caring NUPE and COHSE and supported by the caring Labour party, I took blood samples in taxis through picket lines. That was the extent of their caring. In this spirit of great caring, dredging up personal cases of misery to try to find the one case that has gone badly in the national health service and overlooking all the reforms and successes that we have had, they have resorted to the lowest form of political debate. To try to say that every case that has gone wrong is typical is loathsome.

For the first time since its inception, Conservatives have introduced into the health service the idea that preventive medicine is important. Before the GP contract was introduced, we were told by our opponents—by the British Medical Association and by those who now oppose the new Home Secretary, whose bravery in introducing the reforms should be attested to—that we would lose the ability to see elderly patients and that people would not get the medicines that they require. We have seen record immunisations, record numbers of women having cervical smears, and record numbers of visits. Yet when our opponents are asked to say what is good about Conservative health reforms, they are not able to give any examples.

look forward to giving many examples and I am sorry that the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) is not here to listen to some of the positive aspects of Conservative health policy. It is time he realised that not everything that the Government do—even in his view—is bad.

It is a great honour to speak in the House. I hope that in the coming months and years the health debate in the House will be more constructive than in the past, but, in the words of the Leader of the Opposition, I fear that it will be a triumph of my fears over my hopes.

I hope that Conservative Members will contribute constructively. The Queen's Speech was excellent and Conservative Members, especially the newcomers, look forward to the legislation that follows it, which will be good not only for our party but, more importantly, for the country.

6.55 pm

Dr. Tony Wright (Cannock and Burntwood): I should like, first, to congratulate you, Madam Deputy Speaker, on your appointment. I should like to congratulate the new hon. Members who spoke before me—my hon. Friend the Member for Coventry, North-East (Mr. Ainsworth) and the hon. Member for Woodspring (Dr. Fox)—who, in their different ways, were excellent.

I am particularly grateful to be called now because I have spent most of my life suffering from a disability which is known as alphabetical order. My name is Wright, which has meant that I have tended always to be at the end of queues. People who use the principle of alphabetical order tend to think that it is a democratic, a just principle. In fact, it is just only to people who fall at the beginning of the alphabet. I hope now to escape that disability and look to Madam Speaker for help.

As evidence of my disability, I have a small majority —1,506. I sometimes think that it might be larger if only my name were different! Research shows that, if one's name appears high on the ballot papers, one has a small advantage. I had thought that if my name were, to take some of my neighbouring Members, perhaps Cormack, Budgen, Cash or even Boothroyd my majority might be 1,507 or 1,508.

Thinking about it more, it struck me that that political disability had loomed large in British political life generally. If one considers the people who have succeeded and those who have failed, one sees the principle in action. One has only to cast one's eyes across the list of British Prime Ministers this century to see exactly what the principle means. From Asquith to Attlee, from Balfour to Bonar Law to Baldwin, from Campbell-Bannerman to Churchill to Callaghan, the principle has been rampant through the political history of the 20th century. The great political casualties of the century have been the Thatchers and the Wilsons.

Indeed, during the debate yesterday, looking at the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, I thought that there but for the alphabet would not be a man reduced to such a sorry parlance. If his name were not Waldegrave, he surely would not be the Minister for filing cabinets and name badges for ticket inspectors. I noted that the Prime Minister, like Harold Macmillan before him, had taken the sensible precaution of coming slap in the alphabetical middle.

[Dr. Tony Wright]

Hon. Members will notice that in selecting a constituency—Cannock and Burntwood—I chose one very near to the beginning of the alphabet to reverse the principle that I have been describing so far. It is in south Staffordshire. It is the heart, the quintessence, of middle England. It contains the towns of Cannock, Hednesford and Burntwood. Hednesford was particularly proud this week as its football team reached the final of the Welsh cup. I will not detain hon. Members with the mysteries of how a town in Staffordshire can reach the final of the Welsh cup, but I am sure that the House would wish to congratulate the team on that splendid achievement.

It has the beauties of Cannock Chase on its doorstep. Its people hewed coal for 100 years and are now having to find a different future. Its history is that of England itself. It was represented in the House for 25 years after the second world war by Jennie Lee, whom Labour Members remember particularly fondly, and who I also associate with adult education. It was inhabited by people such as the present Conservative hon. Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack) for a time and by Gwilym Roberts, who will be remembered as a warm, passionate and committed Welshman. I am happy to report that last week he was triumphantly re-elected to Cannock Chase district council. Part of the constituency was represented for a time by the present hon. Member for The Wrekin (Mr. Grocott). I pay tribute to him for the friendship and support that he showed me on coming to the House.

My immediate predecessor was Gerald Howarth, with whom I totally disagreed on everything. However—this is a tribute to him and me—we managed to maintain enough mutual respect to conduct a reasonably civilised election campaign. I acknowledge the work that he did for the people of the constituency and offer him just one word of consolation at this moment of disappointment for him. As one of the most fervent torch bearers for the handbag across the water, the present disposition of the House and of his party may not prove to be so congenial to him now as it was then.

As we have heard, many new hon. Members point to the contrast between what happens in this House and the din and clash of opinions outside—I refer especially to those who come hot foot from election contests in marginal seats—the subjects that people were talking about in the election. Like the miners in my constituency, who want to talk about the threat of privatising the only remaining coal mine. Or the blight caused by opencast mining ripping apart the environment. Or the distinction of having the first toll road—at least for 300 years—being driven through their countryside. They want to talk about cuts in the education system and about why there are no houses for the young people or enough jobs. They want to talk about such issues and they ask what the House is doing about them. Instead we find the ritual confrontations, the impassioned speeches to the near-empty Benches, the votes of which the result is already known. People outside ask what is going on—what is the House doing?

It is a fact—although it may be an unpalatable one—that this country has never taken the business of democracy very seriously. We have taken the idea of strong government and a strong executive very seriously but not democracy. Indeed, only half a century ago, in a classic formula, the Tory Leo Amery, when describing our system of government, said that it was

"government of the people, for the people, with but not by the people."

It was said of Leo Amery himself that if he had been just half a head higher, and if his speeches has been half an hour shorter, he might have become Prime Minister.

This process is now being taken much further. We already have the most centralised, concentrated and secretive system of government in the western world and the Government are now removing the existing arenas in which people can argue, do politics and disagree. We have the most anti-pluralist Government presiding over the historic emasculation of local government, sweeping away diversity, pluralism and independence wherever they can find them.

In the spirit of non-contentiousness that distinguishes these maiden speeches, I say with all seriousness that an older Conservative tradition would have been extremely worried about such tendencies. It was that tradition which used to taunt the Opposition about their centralising tendencies and their ambitions to strip local government of its powers. Yet these are exactly the characteristics that have distinguished the past 13 years of Conservative party rule.

My final remarks will cover education because it is my trade. I have spent my life in education and I feel deeply and passionately about it. There is much to talk about, especially what is happening to universities and the threat to adult education in which I work. But it is about schools and the government of schools that I particulary want to talk. I have worked a great deal with school governors in the past few years, and I am bound to say that I was a great enthusiast for the Government's school reforms and for the education Act of 1986 because I believed that it introduced a new partnership into schools.

The Gracious Speech mentions some changes that are to be made which will affect school governors. The Government have now betrayed—that is perhaps a strong word but not too strong a word—school governors. They are having to re-educate them in the task that they are being asked to perform. School governors thought that they had gone into the education system as volunteers—many were parents—to support their schools and the system. They are now being taught that there is to be no education system and that schools are to be pitted against schools, parents against parents and communities against communities. That will certainly be the consequence of enforcing universal opt out. Governors gave up their time believing that there was one system to care for all children, but they are now being told that the system is to be driven by market forces. It is not surprising that many of those people are now leaving school government in vast numbers because they are not prepared to do what the Government want. Therefore, the Government have huge recruitment problems for school governors as a direct consequence.

I return to where I began. I am grateful to have swapped the principle of alphabetical order for the principle of catching the Speaker's eye. I hope that that principle will continue and that we shall consign alphabetical order to the dustbin of history and that from now—at least sometimes—the first shall be last and the last shall be first.

6.45 pm

Mr. George Walden (Buckingham): May I say to the hon. Member for Cannock and Burntwood (Mr. Wright) that my name is Walden and my constituency is Buckingham—we should get together some time and drown our sorrows. The hon. Gentleman demonstrated the art of levity while at the same time combining it with substance and, I was glad to note, a hint of passion on the subject of education. He also seemed to speak with feeling about the constitution and the powers of this House. I recommend that, as a man of some wit, the hon. Gentleman should read, if he has not already done so, what is by far the best and wittiest study on that subject. It naturally comes from a Conservative writer, Mr. Ferdinand Mount. The hon. Gentleman is probably already aware of it, but I commend it to him. He will find, to his surprise, that he agrees with much of it.

I congratulate you, Madam Deputy Speaker, and the new "Speakerine", as she would be called in France. Were he here, I would also congratulate my right hon. Friend the new Secretary of State for Education. I believe that post to be the most important in Government. Incidentally, on the constitution, I should like us to ditch some of the fusty old stuff about the great offices of state—I know of no more important office of state than that of Secretary of State for Education.

I have only a few minutes into which to cram my most recent prejudices, so I must get on. To sum up those prejudices, I believe that the main problems facing this country are not mentioned directly in the Queen's Speech. I believe that we are an under-educated and over-housed country, and I should like to explain why in about five minutes.

The first thing that I hope that my right hon. Friend the new Secretary of State will do is to reconsider nursery education. The Queen's Speech talks about raising standards at all levels. For most people in this country there is no nursery level, so he will not have to worry about standards in that respect. However, there should be a nursery level, and the fact that we won the election does not mean that we can simply ditch that subject in the hope that the many women in this country will not notice. It is a subject that my right hon. Friend should reconsider because the bald and simple fact is that anyone with any money at all buys quality, structured education for his child in order to give that child a head start, thus helping to perpetuate the social divisiveness—I try to avoid the word but I cannot think of any other at the moment—that still lingers in our society. When talking about opportunity in education, let us remember that there can be no opportunity unless every child has a chance at the beginning to get his or her head start.

I hope that my right hon. Friend will consider carefully the statistics routinely churned out by the Department of Education, which are completely misleading and give the impression—I do not know what the latest figure is—that about 85 per cent. or 90 per cent. of children in this country benefit from pre-school education. That is simply not true. The figures include everything from child minding to highly amateur ad hoc organisations which come together to look after children and then drift apart. That is not what I mean by pre-school education, and it is not what exists in more enlightened countries, such as France.

I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education will continue his predecessor's policy of shaking up the bogus philosophy behind primary education in this country, which has caused enormous damage—as usual—to people at the bottom of the social pile. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Minister knows what I am talking about. The issue has been raised only in the past year, but we must try to change people's minds and have vastly higher expectations for young children in primary schools because they can do a great deal more than what they are asked to do at present.

The really important element missing from the Gracious Speech involves the organisation of secondary education. Some great educational changes and, indirectly, social changes loom before us. We shall not be able to avoid them, even if we want to. Indeed, I believe that we should not try to avoid them. In particular, I refer to what I hope will be the swift break-up of the comprehensive system. It is not deemed politic on the Conservative Benches to discuss that subject, and that is another reason why I raise it.

It is impossible for Conservative Members to continue to support grant-maintained schools and allow that policy to continue in the post-election rush in some semi-anarchic way and say that it is a grand thing. It will not be grand if that policy—which I wholeheartedly support—leads indirectly to a reversion to primitive selection. It is not just a matter of opting-out schools choosing to become grammar schools. They can do that if they wish. There will be de facto selection in most, probably all, opted-out schools because parents will queue outside them and headmasters and headmistresses, who are human beings, will, whether they know it or not, find ways of selecting the most promising pupils. That would be disastrous, because we would end up with a two-tier system.

The great paradox is that the origin of the comprehensive system, which I believe is a deeply mistaken philosophy, was a typically British, class-conscious reaction to the previous rather crude selective system which, although it produced some fine grammar schools —I know, because I went to one—also produced many wood-sawing schools in which huge numbers of potentially intelligent children were written off at the start.

If we allow the present rather disorganised policy of opting out to continue, there is a danger that we shall return to the earlier system. I am not against selection, but I am against negative selection. There must be a change in philosophy, which is beginning to occur—for example, in Wandsworth—to selection by aptitude. That is what happens in more advanced countries. We do not have it in this country because we are hung up on antique class consciousness in education as we are in respect of so many other aspects of our society. That deforms our vision of education.

We are not concerned about education: we are concerned about the social implications of the organisation of schools, which is totally different. As Confucius would say if he were with us today, the primary function of education is education, and not the social organisation of the country. If we follow that principle, we end up with a healthier system than the old, crude selective system, of which I was a lucky beneficiary but many from my part of the world were not. There is a danger that we shall come full circle and return inadvertently to the earlier system, which would be totally at variance to what I understand to be the Government's philosophy.

[Mr. George Walden]

We shall have to change an entire mentality. We must make people in this country used to the idea that there is nothing wrong, second class or debilitating about being selected by aptitude to attend a largely—though not completely—technological, scientific, vocational school. Such things happen abroad and there is no reason why they should not happen here. We must aim for parity between the academic schools—I use that term in no exact sense—and the more vocational and scientific schools. We must then face the economic consequences of that cultural change.

We cannot have crummy schools as we had under the old crude selective system of secondary modern schools without the facilities or the maths, physics and craft design and technology teachers to provide those schools with social status. I acknowledge that that may be a contradiction in respect of what I said before, but those schools need status to attract people and to get over the terrible cultural prejudice against anything to do with technological or scientific schools.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): We must not forget the fact that aptitude means ability in a particular area. When selecting by aptitude, one would thus be selecting by ability. Is that not the case?

Mr. Walden: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for trying to bring precision to my speech. He is right: there is no final distinction between aptitude and ability. However, there is a different cast of mind. With regard to ability, there is a danger of making a final judgment at the age of 11. Aptitude may imply spotting some ability that has yet to develop. I admit that there are no absolute categories, but it is possible to distinguish between them.

I am convinced that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is considering the process because that is by far the most important subject which does not feature in the Queen's Speech. Necessarily, it entails a reorganisation of local government which may lead to the abolition of local education authorities. The Opposition tend to refer to the LEAs as a democratic process. At the risk of boring myself, I must state once more that they are not democratic when judged by their absolutely piffling turnouts. Most LEAs run education on the basis of effective turnouts of eligible voters of about 15 per cent.

The democratic argument is largely, though not wholly, cant and we should not allow it to stand in our way when we reconsider the issue, as we must if we are not to return to a dangerous and socially damaging form of selection. We must reconsider the role of the LEAs and be bold in our public opposition to the principle of comprehensive education.

I was once in the unfortunate position of having to explain comprehensive education to the communist Chinese Education Minister. He asked me to repeat my explanation—which, as I was trying to explain it in Chinese, proved to be extremely difficult. He simply stared at me in disbelief and said, "You mean to say that you in your country send people of all abilities and aptitudes to the same school and put them in the same class, whatever their progress?" I had to confirm that that happened in this sleepy old country of ours. He could not get over that. In China, for all their peccadillos in some areas, such as human rights, they are pretty hard-headed when it comes to education. When they get rid of this communist nonsense we shall see the proof of that and see some results in China.

My second prejudice, which is linked with the first, is that I disagree fundamentally with the Government's housing policy. It is not the job of this or of any Government to tell people to own their homes. That is a primitive notion—a fetish which is doing enormous social and economic damage to this country, and eveyone knows that. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development knows it and has talked about our housing policy deforming our economy, as it has done—and badly—in the past.

The Queen's Speech states that the Government will look for ways to add to the already dangerously high number of people who own their own houses by changing the law here and there. Although I do not disapprove of those changes in principle—changes to leaseholds or whatever—it seems that there is a danger of the Government feeding house fetishism. They should not encourage home ownership. We do not need more home ownership. People need to have a choice of whether to buy and own their own house or to rent at a reasonable rent—the choice that people enjoy in France, Germany and America, which are all sophisticated countries in that regard. That should be Government policy, rather than to encourage the primitive fetishism of house ownership as the last Government but one did so catastrophically.

How many Members from both sides of the House have been on doorsteps during the election campaign and have been told by a mother, worried to death about her son, that he "got on the housing ladder"—encouraged by Government rhetoric—and fell off the ladder with a £20,000 debt. He is 21 or 22 and has a £20,000 debt before he has started in life. Should we be proud of that when we quote our figures of 67 or 68 per cent.? How high do we want to go? Do we want the country to seize up because of home ownership? In their frenzy to encourage home ownership, the Government seem to have lost sight of the fact that it is not good for business or for mobility. That is one of the reasons why it does not exist to the same extent in other countries.

I am not against home ownership—that would be a grotesque position—but the logic of the Government's philosophy should be not to encourage home ownership but to tell people that they will do their damnedest to give them an effective choice, on a level playing field, between owning and renting. That will overcome the problem. At present, the market is so distorted that there are 7 or 8 per cent. of people in private rented accommodation, while in other countries it is 30 or 40 per cent. I believe that Bangladesh and Switzerland are the only other countries with such high levels of home ownership.

In the present economic conjunction, things are going well. I am optimistic and I do not think that the Government are merely using rhetoric when they sound optimistic; I think that matters will improve. When people feel that they have a little more money in their pockets, one of the first things that they will do is to take out mortgages which are too big for them again, if the Government encourage them to do that. After our last experience of that, I hope that many people will understand the dangers.

To come full circle, this country has two major problems which were not mentioned in the Queen's Speech—we are under-educated and over-housed. To a large extent, the economy comes right if one gets those two

things right, and one solves many economic problems. Those two matters are fundamental. I have confidence that the Government will do largely what I would like them to do on education, but I am a little more diffident about their housing policy because their attitude to home ownership needs to be revised and cooled off. We are over-excited about home ownership. We must tell people to be sensible and not to get into this silly debt business, which has done them and the country so much harm and which has distorted our economy.

Finally, I must mention two constituency matters. The first concerns education for the educationally subnormal. I hope that my hon. Friends on the Front Bench will note one concise question. The other day a constituent who has a 19-year-old daughter with a mental disability who has been to a special school asked me why her daughter's right to attend that school was cut off at the age of 19, when the Government look after other people's further education long after that age at a huge cost. Frankly, I could not find an answer, which is why I am asking my right hon. Friends to provide me with one. If they do not have an answer, I hope that they will do something so that we shall all have one in future.

Secondly, I have a constituency matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment. There is a place called Maids' Moreton near the town of Buckingham in my constituency. There seems to be a presumption that the two places should join, although in neither case do the inhabitants want them to do so. The developer who wants them to join together is one of those persistent types, I am afraid. Why is there no arrangement whereby local government may say that there is a permanent presumption against development in the area because it would create too large a conurbation, and mostly because neither of the two communities wants it? I should be grateful if my right hon. and learned Friend could take note of that.

I have probably spoken for too long, and I apologise.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Before I call the next Member to speak I remind the House of Madam Speaker's ruling that there shall be a 10-minute limit on speeches between 7 and 9 o'clock.

7.6 pm

Mr. A. Cecil Walker (Belfast, North): May I add my congratulations to you, Madam Deputy Speaker, on your appointment and to all those hon. Members who have made their maiden speeches today. The content of those speeches, which was sometimes amusing, was much appreciated by the House.

I had hoped to identify certain references in the Queen's Speech which would enable me to congratulate the Government on having advanced environmental protection in the list of priorities to be considered by the new Parliament. Regrettably, I find that I am unable to offer such congratulations. In reflecting upon certain proposed legislation which might have a bearing, I am concerned that the national lottery Bill may be targeted too narrowly. There must be provision for funding to spill over from heritage projects to encompass remedial environmental works, which are so often absolutely vital, and to commit complete and meaningful preservation of sites and buildings. In that regard, I ask the Government to learn from the justified criticism made of those bodies which have not managed to develop a co-ordinated approach to preserving our heritage in Northern Ireland. Nor do I expect that the intended housing, land and urban development Bill, which will bring another quango into being—the urban regeneration agency—will resolve that long-standing and increasing problem.

My scepticism is based upon the Northern Ireland experience with such bodies, but I shall not digress into a topic about which my hon. Friend the Member for Antrim, South (Mr. Forsythe) has such a close knowledge. From my experience, all too often such bodies tend to theorise on the problem rather than to embark upon practical measures to remedy obvious disadvantages and to arrest further decay.

I understand that the proposed green Bill is in hand, but apparently it will have to await a suitable slot in the crowded parliamentary timetable. That does nothing to convince me that sufficient priority has been given to the subject.

Perhaps the Government are still a prisoner of the former Prime Minister's vision of the great motor car economy and will not face the unpalatable fact that economic recovery alone those lines spells ecological disaster. To borrow a summary from a recent Sunday newspaper, it spells more cars, more factories to build them, more roads to carry them and more toxic fumes.

However, being of a magnanimous nature I accept that the 1990 White Paper on the environment covered everything from the stratosphere to the street corner. The Government were careful to include it in the Conservative manifesto on page 43, but the great issues continue to be addressed only on paper.

I accept that the Prime Minister was one of the first world leaders to announce his intention to attend next month's earth summit in Rio de Janeiro and I appreciate that the proposed environment agency will try to achieve wonderful things. The agency will collate the work of the National Rivers Authority and Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution, regulate the waste operations of local authorities and provide us with annual state-of-the-environment reports.

That is all very commendable, but is there not just the suggestion of another army of paper tigers and another paper mountain? Is not this further consideration of the problems rather than action upon them? Are matters most urgent not developing at too leisurely a pace? Of course, there can be merit in hastening slowly, but we in Northern Ireland have had far too much of the snail's pace approach for far too long. We cannot draw limited comfort from some possible momentum in the proposed legislation.

Northern Ireland will undoubtedly be ignored and excluded yet again. I wish to caution the House on the basis of the previous Government's record on such matters in the Province. Following the publication of the Rossi report, I welcomed its recommendations and laid particular emphasis on recommendation 26 regarding the creation of a Northern Ireland environment agency. I did so enthusiastically not only on behalf of my party but in recognition of the widespread demand for such a body from a wide cross-section of informed opinion in the Province.

I share the opinions of the Select Committee on the Environment which catalogued the defects, weaknesses and difficulties that had arisen in the management of Northern Ireland. I use that term deliberately because the Province enjoys, not democratic government, but an unco-ordinated system operated by appointees and

[Mr. A. Cecil Walker]

professional officers. I should like to know how I can repose trust in the Government's avowed environmental commitment when what I believe to be the central recommendation of the Rossi report has been rejected.

Surely in this matter it would have been useful to test such a structure in Northern Ireland, especially as the Government have not hesitated in the past to inflict experimental systems on the Province with no regard for the wishes of the people there. I would not wish Great Britain to have expectations raised, as happened in Northern Ireland, and then to suffer the disappointment of finding that the shadow, not the substance, became the reality.

The Government are failing to meet their obligations to protect internationally important areas for birds, particularly within Northern Ireland. A new Royal Society for the Protection of Birds' report reviews the Government's performance in protecting wildlife sites under the European Community birds directive and the Ramsar convention. The report highlights the "appalling designation record in Northern Ireland", where to date, of the 17 internationally recognised important bird areas in the Province, only two have been given any designation: Lough Neagh-Lough Beg, which was designated a Ramsar site in 1976, and Swan island, in Lough Larne, which was designated as a special protection area earlier this year. RSPB studies show that a further 11 unprotected, important bird sites in Northern Ireland are threatened by damaging development proposals, poor management or neglect.

At the present overall United Kingdom designation rate of only four sites a year, these internationally important areas will not be fully protected until the year 2040. Many will be destroyed before designation occurs. A comparison with other EC member states shows that Denmark and Belgium should complete their designations by 1992, with only the Netherlands achieving completion later than the United Kingdom. The total United Kingdom land area designated to date is less than 1 per cent. compared with more than 20 per cent. in Denmark.

The report on sites of special scientific interest in the 1990s, "A Check on the Health of Internationally Important Bird Areas", also shows that hundreds of important wildlife sites have been damaged or destroyed since 1981.

I call on the new Government to provide substantial, additional resources for environmental departments and statutory conservation agencies; to promise to complete all remaining designations of Ramsar sites within five years; and to make a firm commitment to protect these areas, allowing development only in the most exceptional circumstances. My call is for effective action throughout the United Kingdom to address now as a matter literally of life and death the issues of effective environmental protection and regeneration.

7.16 pm

Mr. Anthony Steen (South Hams): I have enjoyed immensely listening to many outstanding maiden speeches this afternoon. I do not wish to deal with any one particular speech, but I will speak about urban problems and the urban regeneration agency. For that reason, I was extremely interested in what was said by the hon. Member for Coventry, North-East (Mr. Ainsworth). As the House will know, I was Member of Parliament for an inner-city seat in Liverpool for nine years. The hon. Gentleman's comments were reminiscent of many of the problems that I experienced in Liverpool some years ago. Therefore, I was particularly concerned by what he said about Coventry. The problems have not gone away either in Coventry or in many other urban conurbations.

As the House may remember, I was a youth and social worker for many years before I came to the House. I was appointed by Lord Wilson, as he now is, as leader of one of the largest community projects of the Home Office that was concerned with urban problems. The hallmarks of the inner city are well known: deprived communities, unskilled labour, poor housing, race relations problems, rundown small firms and high unemployment. Inner-city areas got those hallmarks because over the years the poorest and least skilled congregated usually where they landed from boats—for example, in Liverpool and London—or at the centres of industry, such as the textile industry in Manchester. Small firms existed in those areas and were interdependent.

Over the past 25 years modern technology, high rents and the demolition of slums have resulted in the population moving from inner-city areas to outer city areas. The vast council estates of the 1950s and 1960s meant the wholesale displacement from the inner city to the outer city of poor and unskilled workers. Although the small firms continued there, they declined.

The hon. Member for Coventry, North-East used the image of a doughnut, but the place where the jam once was is now an empty hole. The people have departed and the jobs have gone. The inner cities are derelict, rundown and depressed areas. We are witnessing an attempt by the Government—and they have poured thousands and millions of pounds into it—to put the jam back into the inner city. I would normally be critical of pouring money into solving such problems, but I welcome the Government's announcement in the Queen's Speech about the setting up of an urban rengeneration agency, which is another attempt to deal with the problem. There have been many attempts and you will be aware, Madam Deputy Speaker, that the Labour Administrations of the 1960s and 1970s set up many projects, as did the Conservative Government in the 1980s. The projects all had interesting names, but they often bore little relationship to what they did.

The Government have announced another attempt to revive the inner cities, but the jam will not be put back into the inner cities unless new methods of transportation are introduced. Unless motorways and the road transport networks go right into the inner city—to the point where jobs could be created and the enterprise zones and the urban development corporations are located—one will not get real commercial, industrial and manufacturing growth. The inner cities need new rail heads. The trouble with the railway stations in the principal cities is that it is impossible to drive large articulated vehicles to them. Therefore, it is not possible to use the railways to transport equipment and goods out of the inner city. Poor transport links rule out a revival in the inner cities.

The revival is taking place in the outer cities. It is happening at the junctions of motorways and on the outskirts of the major conurbations where all the new warehouses and factories have been built. Instead of

people wanting to return to the inner cities, the movement is from them to edges of the cities, to the motorway junctions and to the areas beyond them to new towns.

The Government are brave to introduce another agency. However, despite the millions of pounds that have been poured into the inner cities by Labour and Conservative Governments, the inner cities continue to decline because there is no way of creating wealth and of housing people: the people have gone. Those who remain are the poorest, the most deprived and the unemployed and they have no scope or future.

I wish to consider what I hope that the urban regeneration agency will do. In my book "New Life for Old Cities" I considered how urban areas could be regenerated. I am glad to say that the Government followed most of my recommendations, but they have not done the trick. In the 1980s, the Secretary of State will remember that I wrote another book, entitled "Public Land Utilisation Management Schemes" which was an attempt to show how to get rid of derelict and vacant land in public ownership. The then Secretary of State for the Environment set up a register to identify the amount of publicly owned vacant land. At its height, it amounted to 116,000 acres, but since then the figure has dropped to 80,000 acres. However, there is still much public vacant land which could be used. "PLUMS" proposed that public authority land should not be confiscated but valued and a share certificate issued for that value. The land should then be marketed. Local authorities do not have the marketing ability to enable the value of the land to grow.

I hope that the new agency will follow my proposal of exchanging derelict and vacant land in public ownership —owned by local authorities and utilities—for a certificate which will grow in value as the land is marketed. That is why I intervened in the speech of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment to ask whether the new agency would have marketing powers. In the past, land has been compulsorily purchased and taken away from the public authorities, but they should share in its increased value—increased as a result of marketing and as a result of being passed over to the new urban regeneration agency. That agency will be headed by my former right hon. Friend the Member for Worcester, Mr. Peter Walker, so it is bound to be successful in its attempts to tackle the problems.

I am concerned about vacant land in the inner cities, but the problem can be solved by building on it. However, that will not happen if we do not do something about the problems of housing and job creation in those areas. I hope that the new agency will get hold of the land and give it to private developers who will do something with it. As they build factories, houses and shops, the value of the site will go up and the local authority will benefit from that increase in value because the value of its shares will increase. That must be the right approach.

There is a second reason why the inner cities should be revived and that is illustrated by my experience in my constituency in south Devon, which is surrounded by Plymouth——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. I must point out to the hon. Member that his time is up.

7.27 pm

Mr. Neil Gerrard (Walthamstow): May I add my congratulations to you, Madam Deputy Speaker, on your appointment and thank you for calling me to speak in the House for the first time?

I want to follow the tradition of the House by saying something briefly—it will be brief because of the time limitation—about my predecessors in Walthamstow. The seat of Walthamstow, West, which is part of the present constituency, was held shortly after the war by Clement Attlee, who was a Member of great distinction and Prime Minister for some years after the war. From 1970 to 1987, Walthamstow was represented by Eric Deakins who, I am sure, hon. Members on both sides will remember with respect and affection. From 1987 to 1992, Walthamstow was represented by Hugo Summerson. It would be foolish to pretend that he and I agreed politically, but I know that he did his best to represent the issues and concerns of the people of Walthamstow. I certainly intend to follow his example.

I want to refer particularly to some of the proposals in the Queen's Speech that affect local government, housing and homelessness. It comes as no great surprise, as my hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) remarked, that the vast majority of constituency problems brought to hon. Members are about housing. Given the scale of the housing problem in London and in the country as a whole, I find the sections of the Queen's Speech devoted to housing remarkably thin. There are no serious proposals in the Gracious Speech to tackle the problems of homelessness, and I fear that those problems will worsen in the future.

There are various reasons why the situation is unlikely to improve. In east London, in the area that I represent, Bow county court deals with most of the repossession cases from Walthamstow, which has the second highest number of repossessions in Britain—that in an area in which, by London standards, house prices are extremely low. In many cases, the banks and building societies, the prime lenders, seem uninterested and unwilling to work with other agencies which are trying to do something about repossessions and debt management.

A day conference was recently called by my borough council. It was attended by fuel providers, members of citizens advice bureaux and representatives of council departments, but the banks and building societies refused to participate. The problem of repossessions will continue despite the odd half per cent. reduction in interest rates. It will continue so long as people are made redundant and we live with the present rate of unemployment.

We have heard about proposals to improve the rights of tenants to have repairs and improvements made to their properties. My immediate reaction to what has been suggested is that it is another phoney charter, with the blame being placed everywhere but with the Government. Local authorities are being denied the resources to do the repairs, and at the same time are being blamed for failing to deliver what their tenants need.

It is meaningless to say that tenants living in larger estates should have the right to improve their properties when millions of pounds are required to rejuvenate those blocks and remedy structural problems. Such a task is far beyond the capacity of individual tenants. Consider what

[Mr. Neil Gerrard]

has happened in an area such as mine in recent years. I think of an estate that is now part of a housing action trust, one of the few such trusts that have been established.

Some years ago, the borough council produced a scheme for the total redevelopment of that estate, with the replacement of tower blocks by low-rise property. The Government were approached, but they said that the local authority could not be allowed to spend the necessary money. After protracted discussions with tenants, the formation of a tenant-controlled company was proposed. That would have enabled the company to do the work and have access to private money. The scheme was thought through and plans drawn up, but again the Government turned down the scheme.

In other words, when tenants approach the Government with proposals for real tenant involvement and power, the Government show no interest. As I say, that estate is now part of a housing action trust. The Government now have a responsibility, having forced the tenants down that path, to make sure that the redevelopment of the estate is made possible.

I welcome the proposals in the Queen's Speech on the rights of leaseholders. I hope that the legislation will do more than simply give leaseholders the right to acquire freeholds and extend their leases. Leaseholders should have the right to change or choose managing agents and to examine and, if necessary, challenge freeholders' accounts to see whether extortionate service charges are being imposed. Freeholders and landlords should have more responsibilities and be obliged to carry out repairs and improvements. After all, if council tenants are to have the right to have repairs done, the same right should apply to private tenants.

The Asylum Bill will have great impact in my constituency, which has many asylum seekers and various ethnic minorities. Walthamstow has the largest Pakistani community in London. Between 1980 and 1990, I chaired an inquiry into racial harassment in Waltham Forest. It was horrendous to hear what some people told the inquiry about their daily experiences. At one extreme, there were cases of violence, including physical assault and arson. There have been murders in my constituency in recent years. Letter boxes are sealed because people are scared that petrol will be poured through and set alight.

At the other extreme are incidents that might be thought of as trivial, such as verbal abuse and the use of graffiti. But for people who cannot step out of their front doors, go to the shops or take their children to the park, the threat of abuse is not trivial. When that happens every day, it has a great effect on the quality of people's lives.

Legislation such as the Asylum Bill generates a bad atmosphere. When the Bill was last debated, there was much talk of illegal immigration, social security scandals and other forms of criminality. Whenever such statements are made, especially by senior politicians, the suggestion is put about that certain communities are not to be trusted, and that in turn gives the green light to harassment. Indeed, it gives a certain respectability to harassment. That has a serious impact on the daily lives of many of my constituents.

Local voluntary organisations and local authorities must deal with the consequences, especially on housing estates. I regret that the Asylum Bill is to be reintroduced. I hope that, at least, the debate this time will be conducted in a more temperate way and that the Minister will have conducted genuine consultation before the measure is published. Rather than that Bill, my constituents need legislation to deal with harassment and discrimination. I hope that even at this late stage the Government will reconsider their decision to reintroduce the Asylum Bill.

7.37 pm

Mr. Michael Ancram (Devizes): I wish at the outset to offer you, Madam Deputy Speaker, my congratulations on your appointment. I also congratulate the hon. Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Gerrard) on his fluent maiden speech. I am sure that we shall hear much more from him on a subject about which he clearly knows a lot.

I am in an awkward position because mine is not a maiden speech, nor is it a retread speech. I suggested to an hon. Friend that I was a re-retread, to which he replied that I must have worn rather thin. My physical appearance gives the lie to that.

I pay tribute to my predecessor, Sir Charles Morrison, who was respected by hon. Members in all parts of the House for his decency, common sense and independence of spirit. He will be sorely missed. I wish him a happy retirement.

I am privileged to represent the beautiful constituency of Devizes. It is an area of great variety, stretching from Salisbury plain in the south to north of Swindon, and the town of Highworth, in the north. It takes in an enormous number of interests, from defence through agriculture to car manufacturing at the Rover and Honda plants around Swindon. The variety of interests of my constituents that I shall be pursuing here in the coming years will keep me busy. I am fortunate to represent that great constituency.

During the recession, from which thankfully we are beginning to emerge, the construction industry—especially its smaller parts, of which there are many examples in my constituency—was hard hit. Anything that revives interest and confidence in the housing market will be greeted with great relief, and with that in mind I welcome the references in the Gracious Speech to tenants' rights. The dramatic achievements in extending the variety of housing tenure and, therefore, choice since 1979 have together formed one of the most profound sea changes of the past decade.

We have broken away irrevocably from the segregated housing of the post-war years, that soul-destroying and socially divisive separation between council and owner-occupied housing. The variety of forms of tenure and of housing agencies, not least the still growing housing association movement and the birth of other new agencies such as housing action trusts, have extended beyond recognition the frontiers of individual housing choice. New joint ventures by housing authorities will take that process still further, and I hope that we shall give them every encouragement.

I welcome the increased funding for the Housing Corporation this year, which I hope will be used in imaginative and sensible ways. It has been said by several hon. Members this evening that homelessness is of concern to us all wherever it arises, and I believe that we now have the means to tackle it in a constructive way. We need a co-ordinated approach and a continuing will to achieve it.

I welcome also the proposal to extend the rent-to-mortgage scheme to England from north of the border. When wearing another hat, I was somewhat involved in

the original concept of the scheme. I believe that it provides another important avenue of choice for people's homes. I wish the proposal, a fair wind.

At the end of the day, choice is at the root of the Government's philosophy. I am delighted to see that in the Gracious Speech we are not resting on our laurels. There is so much further to go, especially in rural areas such as that which I now have the honour to represent. Choice is meaningful, however, only when it is available to all. I appreciate that we cannot reach that stage overnight and that there is much more to do, but at the same time I believe that the impetus must come from the Government over the next five years. We must show that we shall extend choice as far as we can.

In rural areas there is a major problem in providing affordable housing for local people both for purchase and for rent. So long as it continues, the concept of choice in such areas is of necessity severely qualified. There are those who call for major council house building programmes to meet the problem. I do not subscribe to that view. Council housing has a valuable role in providing one element of choice, but I do not believe that returning, as some Opposition Members have suggested, to massive council house building programmes would bring any long-term benefit to the provision of choice. There are better ways of meeting the problem.

First, I ask my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Treasury Bench to try to ensure that rural housing associations are especially encouraged and that the special problems of geography and population densities in rural areas are recognised. I ask them to ensure that the issue of affordability in rural areas is properly addressed and that housing associations in such areas are given a sufficient share of available resources to meet their particular problems.

Secondly, I ask that local housing associations are encouraged further in their role as enablers rather than providers, and as co-ordinators of imaginative initiatives that can meet the problems of rural housing in a cost-effective and adequate way.

In that context I mention briefly the thorny issue of receipts from council house sales. I am fully aware of the macro-economic considerations that led to the restriction on their use as capital, and I do not argue with those considerations, but we must understand that it is difficult for those who see housing need around them to understand why money which has been raised from housing cannot be spent towards meeting that need. Perhaps my right hon. and hon. Friends will explore with the Treasury the possibility of using receipts from council house sales, not as capital—I understand the difficulties of doing that—but in a different and more revenue-based way as part of the enabling role of housing authorities in providing affordable housing for rent in conjunction with the private sector. That might provide an avenue, and I hope that that approach will be explored. I leave that thought with my right hon. and hon. Friends.

Housing still presents the Government with a vital and exciting challenge. It is one that lies at the heart of the concept of choice, which is central to the quality of life and is the bedrock of individual aspirations. I find it heartening to know that the Government remain determined and enthusiastic about meeting the challenge.

7.45 pm

Mr. Jim Cunningham (Coventry, South-East): First, Madam Deputy Speaker, I congratulate you on your appointment. For the record, I wish genuinely also to applaud the election and appointment of Madam Speaker, which was obviously an historic occasion.

I pay tribute to the work done by my predecessor, Dave Nellist, and in turn to his predecessor, Bill Wilson, and also his predecessor, the late Dick Crossman. The House will understand later why I have linked all three of my predecessors.

During different periods Dave Nellist and Bill Wilson, and to a certain extent Dick Crossman, all talked about two particular issues. Dave Nellist and Bill Wilson certainly talked about unemployment and problems associated with it. About 20 years earlier, shortly before the then Labour Government, Bill Wilson spoke of crime being associated with unemployment. Going back further, to 1945, we find Dick Crossman talking about the reconstruction of Europe and of Britain, which again raised the issue of unemployment. My predecessors and the issues to which I have referred were interrelated during different periods.

Coventry, South-East has its fair share of unemployment. Some of the area's major industries have been privatised, and I have been interested to listen to other hon. Members talk about privatisation. When it comes to privatisation, my constituents consider primarily their future prosperity and employment. That is certainly their position in the context of the railways and of General Plessey Telecom. Earlier on, my hon. Friend the Member for Coventry, North-East (Mr. Ainsworth) mentioned Jaguar. Everyone is concerned about unemployment for it is a national problem.

In the past, Coventry was famous for its innovation and its employment prospects. But for the employment prospects, I should not have gone to Coventry. I should probably have gone elsewhere, and some people in Coventry may think that that would have been a good idea.

Coventry, South-East has employment problems and an inner city problem. Dick Crossman comes into that, because when he was a Minister he said that the then Labour Government would tackle inner city problems. He certainly produced innovative ideas. Some Conservative Members may argue that that Government's policies and ideas did not necessarily lead to success. I spent 20 years in local government, and I can say that if there was a lack of success it was because of the lack of resources provided by the Government and their predecessor. There was a switch of emphasis and of policies. An example would be the reduction in urban aid grant. Those with experience of local government will know what I am talking about. There are many other examples.

Coventry, South-East, like the rest of the country, suffers from a lack of resources to develop its education system. We need resources for school building repairs, for building new schools and for better teacher training. Those problems should be dealt with; they are more important than talk of tax reductions.

Coventry, South-East has a major council housing problem because of the lack of Government resources to carry out the necessary repairs and to deal with homelessness; which means building homes for people who cannot afford to buy in the private sector. A great

[Mr. Jim Cunningham]

many people in the private sector are being subjected to mortgage foreclosures, and the numbers are rising in my area.

There has been much talk of home ownership from the Government and from previous Conservative Governments. Freedom to choose does not exist without economic freedom, and my constituency has its fair share of people without that.

We have another problem, which is not peculiar to Coventry, South-East. My hon. Friend the Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Gerrard) touched on it earlier when he mentioned the Asylum Bill. That Bill would have been all right if it had been conceived in justice. Instead, it was conceived in panic, because of Europe's fear of migrations from the east and the south. In many parts of Europe there is a phobia about those migrations, which are seen as a threat, and the Bill was one of the panic measures adopted by European Ministers.

To return to Dick Crossman, in 1945 we were going through the same sort of major debate on Britain's relations with Europe as we are having today——the "will she, won't she" debate. The question is whether we become more involved in Europe. The present Government, and former Governments, have procrastinated on that, but the Government have just won an election and it is time they clarified their position on Europe. If they do not want to be members, let them tell the country so. If they want to be only half-hearted members, let them tell the country so. But they should not mislead the country into thinking that they are involved in hard negotiations over Britain's rights when in fact they are putting on a charade—a half-hearted attempt to kid the Europeans that we want to play a major part as members of the European Community.

There was no real vision in the Queen's Speech. Some of my colleagues have already mentioned the plight in which the United States finds itself, and the trends in our inner cities which could lead to a similar situation here. The Queen's Speech was disappointing in that respect. There is no vision in the United States, either, and here we play petty party politics while a number of aspects of policy remain quite wrong. The speech did not deal with the fundamental problems of this country.

We have had debates about devolution for Scotland and Wales, but what about devolution for England? What about taking more power away from the English centre and giving it to people to exercise more constructively in new forms of regional government? The test for Europe will certainly be how effective regional government here can be.

I am honoured to have taken part in this debate, and I hope to serve the people of Coventry, South-East and the people of this country to the best of my ability.

7.54 pm

Sir David Mitchell (Hampshire, North-West): I add my sincere congratulations to those of many others who have expressed their delight at seeing you, Madam Deputy Speaker, in the Chair today.

With great pleasure, too, I follow the tradition of congratulating the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Cunningham) on his maiden speech. His constituency has a reputation of being one with a lively representative in the House, and the hon. Gentleman did not fail to follow in that tradition, so well set by his predecessor Dave Nellist, who was always controversial and who always put his case forcefully to the House. I am not the only Member who will look forward with interest to what the hon. Gentleman has to say in future.

I do not want to detain the House long, and in any case I will not be allowed to do so. I want to raise an environmental matter which is of considerable importance to my constituency and which is already causing anxiety and even fear there.

On 21 June, the summer solstice arrives and large numbers of hippies, itinerants and new-age travellers can be expected. Some of my constituents call them by names that cannot be expressed in parliamentary language. Large numbers are expected, and I prophesy that they will assemble in my part of Hampshire from the end of May. The same happened last year and the year before, and each time more of them came. Last year, about 4,500 camped at Rats Lodge in Longstock and, had it not rained, considerably more of them would have come. One can only wonder what will happen this year if there is fine weather.

I noticed that on the spring bank holiday about 30,000 people attended a pop festival at Lechlade in Gloucestershire, and if more itinerants and hippies come to my constituency in the pre-solstice period, the noise disturbance, the petty crime and the filth that they will leave behind will cause my constituents great anxiety. Such concern was well expressed last week when a public meeting was held in the town hall at Stockbridge. It was so full that 50 people had to be turned away—a good reflection of the extent of public anxiety.

The motion on the Loyal Address was seconded by my hon. and filial Friend the Member for Gedling (Mr. Mitchell) with many happy turns of phrase. The Queen's Speech stated:

> "My Government will work both at home and abroad to protect the environment. They will ensure that the environment remains a key issue in all policy making".

It is certainly a key issue in Hampshire, and I want to raise two related problems with the Minister today—first, the parking of several hundred caravans, dormobiles and cars in a mass trespass by new-age travellers; and, secondly, the immensely noisy pop festival, for which the travellers provide the core and general set-up.

When large numbers of caravans arrive, landowners can ask the police to move them on. The police, using section 39 of the Public Order Act 1986, can do just that. In parenthesis, I should say that I have immense praise for the way in which the Hampshire constabulary has operated, avoiding confrontation but being firm and fair at the same time. The police move them on, but the question is where they move them on to. In Hampshire, they move them on to a loophole in the law, and it is that loophole that I want Ministers to plug as soon as possible.

Hampshire has 400 miles of green lanes. Many are classified as BOATS—bridleways open to all traffic. The verges are not marked, there are no kerb stones, there is no proper delineation and they have been there for some hundreds of years. When they are moved on, the travellers settle on either side of those green lanes. The police cannot know whether they are on private land or on a public right of way because there is no clear marking. If they are unable to prove that a traveller is on private land, they cannot evict him using section 39 of the Public Order Act. The

police are then inhibited because they know that if they make a mistake they can be sued for wrongful arrest and false imprisonment.

One simple solution available to the Government is to extend section 39 to apply to green lanes, public rights of way and roads through the countryside at the discretion of the police. We are dealing not with a traffic problem but with a public order matter.

When I raised the matter in the House on 12 December 1991, the Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department—my hon. Friend the Member for Fareham (Mr. Lloyd)—agreed to suggest that a meeting be arranged between the Departments of the Environment and Transport and the Home Office. I am grateful to the Minister of State at the Department of the Environment for arranging that meeting in February with representatives of the police and Hampshire county council. The Minister recognised that action was and is required and I thought that I saw his hand in the Conservative party's manifesto during the general election which said that the Caravan Sites Act 1968 would be reviewed with the aim of reducing the nuisance of illegal encampment. That proposal is welcome, but it is not in the Gracious Speech and I and many of my constituents are worried about what will happen as the solstice approaches this year if there has been no change in the law. I have to tell Ministers in the Department of the Environment that I think that we are right to call for action now to deal with the matter.

There is a second issue that I wish to touch on briefly —where to site the noisy, pop festival for which the travellers now choose the site, provide the core and much of the organisation. I want to make three points. First, such pop festivals will take place; the question is where. If the police just move people on, there comes a time when those people will stop somewhere. They cannot spirit 6,000 or 8,000 people into thin air. That somewhere will go on being ill-thought-out, unprepared, invariably unsuitable and a confounded nuisance to those who live nearby. Clearly, we need a more constructive approach. The Government, with the Secretary of State for the Environment in the lead, should identify sites far away from habitation so that the squatters can be moved to those particular places.

There is one Government Department that can help. The Ministry of Defence has just such sites in its possession. I have no doubt that it will defend its land with as much vigour as it would defend our shores in the event of an enemy attack. Nevertheless, in the wider issue of the environment it is right that the Ministry should be asked to identify sites well away from other people and habitation and make them available in that way.

There are a number of other points that I should like to make, but because of the time factor I shall close by saying that Hampshire county council will soon be in a position to become "designated", with all the benefits which will flow from that, having provided within the county an adequate number of gipsy sites. But the county council expects that it will take six months for the Minister to approve designation when the application is made. Therefore, I want to make a plea to the Minister that when that application comes to the Department of the Environment it should be turned around in six weeks, not six months. Slow decisions are not necessarily any better than quick ones and this matter calls for a fast and effective decision. With those words, I urge Ministers to take action.

8.4 pm

Ms. Estelle Morris (Birmingham, Yardley): My first task is to congratulate you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on your new post and wish you every happiness during the time that you occupy it.

I am the first Member for Birmingham, Yardley to make a maiden speech from the Opposition Benches for some 30 years, and I am only the second Member for Birmingham, Yardley to make a maiden speech from the Opposition Benches in some half a century. Yardley has a reputation for returning a Member of Parliament from the party which goes on to form the Government. That will cause disappointment on both sides of the House—on the Government side because Yardley did not follow the country, and on the Opposition Benches because the country did not follow Yardley. Needless to say, on this occasion I trust in the good political sense of the electorate of Yardley.

My immediate predecessor was David Gilroy Bevan. His great pride was that he was Brummie born and bred and he had a long record of service to the city of Birmingham in this House and in local authorities within Birmingham. There is a wide gulf between us politically, but whenever our paths crossed he was most courteous. He was also most generous in defeat, for which I thank him.

My last Labour predecessors from Yardley were Syd Tierney and Ioan Evans, both highly respected Members of the House and the Labour party. I was delighted to have Syd Tierney campaign for me in Yardley during the election. Having helped to win the marginal seat of Yardley for Labour, he then returned to his home in the north-east to help win the marginal seat of Barrow and Furness for Labour. Therefore, we have much to be grateful to Syd Tierney for.

My constituency is on the south-east side of Birmingham, adjacent to the national exhibition centre and Birmingham international airport. It relies for employment mainly on manufacturing industry within Birmingham and neighbouring Coventry. The economic prosperity of manufacturing in the west midlands region is the main factor which determines the economic prosperity of my constituents and I hope that in the next few years we shall see an upturn in the fortunes of that industry.

I have spent the past 18 years in education. I have worked in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Cunningham), who has just made his maiden speech. It is on the subject of education that I wish to address a few remarks to the House. I have in my constituency two comprehensive schools and many more primary schools, which offer a good standard of education to their pupils and communities. That is a great achievement when set against the background of change, uncertainty and underfunding that education has had to face.

When I met people during the election the one thing that they wanted for education was stability. They are fed up with ministerial changes of mind. As soon as one ministerial directive has been answered, it is countered with another and they start again. They also want stability of funding so that head teachers do not have to spend their time applying to this or that Government Department for funding for this or that project in order to educate the children whom they seek to serve.

Those who want stability in education will be deeply disturbed by the recent talk of the possible reintroduction

[Ms. Estelle Morris]

of selection in secondary schools. If we were to reintroduce selection it would be the biggest upheaval that schools have had to face in recent decades, and the biggest danger to children's education that they have had to face in their lifetime.

I call upon the Government to end the speculation that selection may be returning by making it clear that they will accept no proposals for reorganisation from local authority or grant-maintained schools which include an element of selection either on academic ability or on aptitude for a particular subject. Those who favour selection advance it as a means of raising standards and widening choice. It is neither. Selection gives more power to schools and less choice to parents. Many parents will be powerless to exert any influence over the schools their children attend, which runs counter to the Government's stated intention of trying to increase parental choice.

The other side of the selection coin is rejection. For every pupil whose self-esteem is raised because he or she has been selected, the self-esteem of many other pupils is damagingly depressed by rejection. For every so-called first-choice school that attracts extra resources, there will be more so-called second-choice schools struggling to attract the resources that they need to raise standards.

It is impossible to devise a selection system, whether it be based on academic ability or subject aptitude, which does not hand the failure label to some children and the second-class label to some schools. That is no way to improve standards or widen choice. It favours the few at the expense of the rest. At the heart of any education policy should be a strategy, desire, and aim to raise the standard of every child's education and of every school. Selection will not do that.

During the general election campaign, parents and educationists spoke to me not of selection but of smaller class groups; of giving more time to teaching and less to form filling. Head teachers told me that they wanted to spend more time managing their schools and less time raising money to fund essential resources. They never referred to selection as a means of achieving those objectives. The Government ought to remove once and for all the spectre of selection from the education agenda on which this Session of Parliament is about to embark.

I am pleased to have made my maiden speech in a debate which embraces so many issues of concern to my constituents. I hope that in the months and years to come I shall speak again on their behalf. I am proud to represent my constituents and my party in the House, and I shall always do so to the best of my ability.

8.12 pm

Lady Olga Maitland (Sutton and Cheam): I have the privilege of succeeding Sir Neil Macfarlane, who held the seat of Sutton and Cheam for 18 years. He had a distinguished career, and he served as a Minister for seven years. Sir Neil's time as a sports Minister left a heavy mark on him, for he had to cope with both the Bradford fire tragedy and the Heysel stadium disaster. On a more cheerful note, Sir Neil was himself an enthusiastic sportsman. He was captain of the parliamentary golf society, and boasted proudly that over a five-year period he led it to only one victory.

Sutton and Cheam is fairly well known throughout the land partly through its association with entertainers, such as Harry Secombe, and its adopted son, Tony Hancock —who, wearing the expression of a disappointed basset hound, lived at 2 Railway cuttings, East Cheam. He brought laughter to millions, but the problem for fans seeking his home was that his address was entirely fictitious. Tony Hancock in fact lived at a far less interesting abode in north London.

My constituency lies 13 miles from Westminster, inside the M25. Today's quiet, leafy streets belie a heritage that dates back to neolithic times. In those days, man travelled by river. Transport is still an enormous issue today, and I doubt that the early dwellers would envy the 3,000 commuters who struggle up to London on Network SouthEast.

The rail journey from Sutton has become so hazardous that no passenger can predict the time of his or her arrival. One constituent told me that the 8·17 am train is now known as the 8.37 am train, because it is always 20 minutes late. The service has not been improved by British Rail's programme of cutting down trackside trees on the basis that falling leaves cause train delays. It is hardly surprising that there has been an outcry by my constituents, who feel that local beauty has been sacrificed by British Rail going for an easy but by no means proven option. It is more a case of whistling in the wind.

I welcome therefore the Government's plans for privatising British Rail. Meanwhile, I trust that the passengers' charter will come in useful. A refund on fares would at least sugar the pill.

I deliberately chose to speak on the subject of education in the debate on the Gracious Speech because Sutton's character is best represented by its excellence in schooling, which is very much the result of Government policies. There can be found in Sutton the best examples of the benefits of offering the widest possible choice. Our two grant-maintained grammar schools—Nonsuch and Sutton Manor—have made such a mark that they are easily holding their own in *The Times* list of top 250 schools in the country. Today, however, I will focus on another grant-maintained school which I find exciting and elevating every time that I visit it.

Only a few years ago, non-selective Cheam High was regarded as a sink school. It was in such disarray that one of its pupils was caught riding a motor bike through its corridors. The current headmaster, John Vaughan, rescued the situation and reintroduced discipline—for without it children cannot learn. Working with Master and Miss Average, he gave each child hope, a positive identity, and a sense of purpose. In short, he put into practice the Government's programme of vocational education.

The pupils of that school are put through the national vocational qualification course at 17-plus, and the results are so good that local employers actively seek to recruit those children. This September, the vocational studies will develop one stage further, when the school's 16-year-olds will be among the first in the country to start taking their BTEC diploma course—the second year of which has parity with an A-level. There is no doubt that it is perfectly possible for all children to be higher achievers, provided their route of learning is suited to their talents. The second year BTEC qualifies children for a university or polytechnic, and serves as the alternative route to higher education.

Academic achievements are worth while, but they are not sufficient in themselves. There is parental concern about the decline in the teaching of the Christian faith. It is a sad reflection that, in a recent survey, only 34 per cent. of the sample knew why Easter day is celebrated, prompting the Archbishop of York to comment:

"It makes me wonder what kind of religious education some of these children receive at school."

In the Education Reform Act 1988, the Government tried their best, in section 8, to provide for a "mainly Christian" education while taking into account other faiths. In practice, that is not always done. Local education authorities set the curriculum, and in some Sutton schools multiculture and multifaith teaching has developed so far that Christianity is reduced to just another faith to be taken down from the shelf, together with Islam, Hinduism, Judaism, Buddhism, and so on. The time has come to take stock of ourselves. We should not be shy of being a Christian country, and we ought to insist that a "mainly Christian" education means just that.

It is not surprising that children lose their way emotionally and spiritually when they have been denied true Christian teaching and know little of what it has to offer. I would like to know how the provisions of the Education Reform Act 1988 are working out in practice nationwide.

It would be surprising if I did not touch briefly on defence. Nine years ago I launched my pro-NATO organisation, Families for Defence. At that time, we challenged the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament and won; but national security remains as important as ever. The cold war may be over, but today we face multiple dangers, with instability in many countries, together with growing nuclear proliferation.

Currently, three former Soviet republics—Russia, Ukraine and Kazakhstan—still hold nuclear weapons, and there is no clear picture of what they are going to do with them. The southern republics now have rapidly growing armies. Next door, Iran is building up an awesome arsenal of her own, and Iraq, far from being subdued by the Gulf war, is reasserting herself.

Not only should we monitor the plight of the Kurds; there is another human rights issue that has been forgotten. I refer to the 850 Kuwaitis known as "The Missing Ones": men, women and children, some only 10 years old, who were snatched from their homes during the occupation and taken to camps in Iraq. Fifteen months later, they are still being held. The International Red Cross has their names.

I regard it as intolerable that the world should forget about those people in the mistaken belief that, after the liberation of Kuwait, all has been satisfactorily resolved. That is not the case, and we have a duty to ensure that they are released and returned home. There are lessons to be learnt. This is yet another example of why we should appreciate that peace has not yet been established in the middle east. We must therefore be ready for every contingency, and must plan for future defence levels accordingly. We must maintain our armed forces at the most credible level.

While I accept that we must adapt to modern conditions, it is vital that we are certain that we know what we are doing, and make up our minds about our commitments. I hope that, during the restructuring process, we do not make decisions now only to regret them later in the crisis. I think that the time has come for us to reaffirm our commitment to NATO. There has been a growing tendency in Europe to suggest that the American input is not necessary. I do not agree: we cannot do without the United States. In a major crisis, the United States is always there to help us, and the Gulf war was no exception. To exclude it would be a severe mistake, and would weaken the Alliance.

By the same token, satisfying the calls by the French and Germans for their own corps would serve no real purpose unless such corps were effectively associated with NATO. Otherwise, such action would undermine NATO and ultimately destroy it. It would do nothing for military effectiveness, and could seriously damage European harmony. In any case, we already have NATO's rapid reaction corps, commanded by the British and specifically designed to take on military tasks in and outside the normal NATO area.

I have raised the question of defence at the end of my speech, in particular, because my constituents in Sutton have frequently raised it with me. They come from courageous stock; they are dogged, and indomitable, and they are people whom I am enormously proud to represent.

8.23 pm

Ms. Ann Coffey (Stockport): I congratulate you on your new position, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and thank you for calling me.

My constituency, Stockport, forms part of the wider metropolitan borough of the same name. It was created after the boundary changes in 1983. My predecessor was Tony Favell, a man of strong beliefs and uncompromising principles. He had, I know, a great deal of affection for Stockport, and his constituents wish him well.

Stockport is a town with a strong sense of community responsibility. Many people give their time, in a voluntary capacity, raise funds for and run the numerous clubs that exist for the elderly and the disabled, and also youth organisations and sports clubs. The Council for Voluntary Service, the citizens advice bureaux, Age Concern and Victim Support co-ordinate the work of hundreds of volunteers who provide a valuable service for the town. Charnwood nursery, a charitable trust which has been in operation for 20 years, offers children with special needs and normal children the opportunity to learn and to co-operate with each other from an early age. It is an excellent example of integration which, sadly, has not been replicated elsewhere.

Stockport has a very vocal local press. Papers such as the *Stockport Express Advertiser*, the *Stockport Times*, the *Stockport Messenger*, the *Heaton Guardian*, *Down Your Way* and the *District Advertiser (Stockport)* tackle issues of local interest with enthusiasm. Stockport also has an excellent football team, Stockport County, which was promoted last season, and is fighting its way to further promotion this season.

In recent years, the education system has experienced a period of rapid change with the introduction of local management of schools, the national curriculum, and assessment and appraisal. The national curriculum itself has changed several times. I have a daughter at a local state school, and I recently attended a parents evening to be given information about the GCSE courses that would help her to choose her options. I was informed by the school that the GCSE was to be altered to place less

[Ms. Ann Coffey]

emphasis on course assessment and more on exams. The staff, however, could give me no information about what that actually meant for the individual courses, as they themselves had no information. Parents attending that meeting felt very confused and anxious. Now parents face the possibility of chaos.

Are the schools of Stockport to remain with the local education authority? Will some or all of them opt out? Who knows? If schools apply for opt-out status, which schools will be given that status? What are the criteria? No one knows. We know the situation this week, but what of next week, next month, next year? This makes nonsense of stability. Will the opt-outs lead to a centralised bureaucracy? The Department of Education must know something, because it is apparently planning to move to a new building called Sanctuary house.

In 1986, Stockport underwent a reorganisation—with all-party support—of its secondary schools for 11 to 18-year-olds, and that has just been completed. It followed the Government's advice to take out spare places. Two schools were closed and three sixth-form colleges were created, one for each area of the town, to reflect local needs and diversity. As Stockport has taken out spare places, parental choice is of necessity limited by available accommodation. If all the schools opt out, set their own criteria for selection, and extend their catchment areas, where does that leave parents? What do they do? Do they apply to their first-choice school and hope that their children get in, apply to their second choice because their children have a better chance of getting into that, or apply to all the schools and hope for the best? It is a nightmare scenario for parents and children alike.

Will the Government allow opted-out schools to borrow extra capital to build? Or will the schools be into "cramming"? Shall we have huge schools with more than 2,000 pupils sending children home for private study because there is no room for them to be taught? Will some schools have shiny new buildings and new mobiles in the grounds, while others struggle to mend their roofs and provide books? That is an obscenity.

Stockport has taken a key role in strategic planning for its post-16 education. Since the three sixth-form colleges were created, the staying-on rate has risen to 75 per cent. What will happen now? If one of the secondary schools opts out and returns to an 11-to-18 intake, will that lead to the closure of one of the sixth-form colleges with consequent loss to the local community? Community groups will be dispossessed, and there will be nowhere for adult education classes to take place.

Who will make the decision? Will it be some distant regional funding council with no local knowledge? What will happen to non-vocational adult education? How will that be funded? Will it be funded at all? Evening and day classes provide the community with an opportunity to take part in an enormous range of interesting and satisfying opportunities. It is part of a long-standing tradition. The loss of non-vocational adult education will be deeply felt.

These are genuine concerns of my constituents. They want stability and an end to the endless stress of change. I urge the Government to listen to those concerns.

8.29 pm

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): I have the honour to congratulate you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on your appointment and to say how delighted all Members are about it. I wish also to congratulate the hon. Member for Stockport (Ms. Coffey) on her interesting speech and to say how much the House enjoyed her humorous approach to an important and serious topic, which helped greatly.

As the hon. Member for Stockport said, the Gracious Speech places importance on education. I shall spend a few moments on that topic and, if there is time, refer to another matter which causes great concern to my constituents.

A number of speakers in this most interesting debate have questioned the comprehensive school system. Some have said that the system has failed totally. I do not accept that statement. The comprehensive ideal was one that those who conceived it could be proud of. It certainly inspired me for many years to work as hard as anybody could in the teaching profession. However, the comprehensive ideal has failed many children because it has proved to be impractical in many schools. That is its tragedy. That does not mean that it was not right to try. What went wrong was the insistence by Labour Governments that there should be a uniform system of comprehensive education. If they had not insisted on having a uniform system of comprehensive secondary education, I do not believe that the comprehensive school ideal would have failed. The ball has to be placed in the court of those who forced the issue to the extent that Labour Governments did.

People in this country and in many other countries will not accept uniformity. They do not want a monopoly. Monopolies lead to failure; people do not work in the ways that they ought to work, which causes problems. The lives of generations of children have been seriously damaged by local authority reorganisation schemes. The reorganisation of London schools into 97 comprehensives by the London county council and its successor, the Inner London education authority, over a period of about 20 years led to the enormous disorganisation of the education of hundreds of thousands of children. To a great extent, that damaged their subsequent careers.

There is a stronger consumer demand now than there has ever been for diversity and choice in education. Happily, the Gracious Speech confirms that fact. Parents, with the encouragement of successive Governments since 1979, are insisting on a choice of school and a choice of courses within that school for their children. That must be right. If people suggest that schools should tell children what courses to follow, that lets children down seriously and damages this nation. Such a process leads to children being under-educated, which damages our country at a time when we need to be able to compete strongly with countries throughout the world.

I believe that parents want more city technology colleges and more church schools. There is a slow increase in the number of church schools. They are very popular and parents want more of them. There is still a strong demand for single sex schools. I believe that the demand for grant-maintained schools will increase enormously. The Opposition need to realise that grant-maintained schools represent a social, political and educational revolution. The Labour party and the Liberal Democrats have not come to terms with that fact. Five out of the five

secondary schools in my constituency applied for grant-maintained status. Four of the five achieved it immediately; the fifth will achieve it fairly soon. These schools are situated both in well-appointed and in very poor areas.

That revolution is being led by the parents. It is led not by Whitehall but by the consumer. In an area in my constituency which the Labour party has always thought of as its own, there was a mock election during the general election campaign. The Conservative candidate was elected with a majority of more than 200 over his opponents. That was not accidental. There has been a revolution. The Labour party needs to come to terms with that fact, if it is to begin to understand what is happening in education. I believe that there will be more grant-maintained schools. There is bound to be an avalanche of applications for grant-maintained schools.

The headmaster of Northolt high school told me that the local authority's cleaning budget took away £70,000 from his school and that he found a private contractor who could carry out the job for £40,000. The £30,000 that he has saved will be spent on more teaching and more books, pencils and rubbers.

Mr. David Hanson (Delyn): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Greenway: No. My time is limited so, with respect, I cannot give way.

Such sums matter very much. Children will benefit greatly as a result. They can see that; so can their parents. The revolt against some comprehensive schools and the lack of choice in some areas could lead, as my hon. Friend the Member for Buckingham (Mr. Walden) said, to a return of selection at 11—probably not on an academic basis but on the same basis as in Germany. As a member of the Select Committee on Education, I went to look at the way in which secondary education is organised in Germany. There, children are guided into the local gymnasium or realschule. The children go perfectly happily into vocational or academic schools. All those schools have ample resources. The teachers are well paid and the children achieve their potential within those schools.

There is a chance that we shall return to selection simply because of the pressure of monopoly throughout the country as a result of the policies of Labour authorities. Parents are revolting against it. The Labour party needs to recognise that it inspired the nation to take this action, in much the same way as happened in eastern Europe where the imposition of uniformity led to rebellion and dramatically changed the system. The Labour party ought to consider that intellectual argument. It is central to what is happening here. The Labour party has contributed to what has happened in a way that it has not fully appreciated.

Parents want their children to be stretched educationally. The country needs our children to be stretched educationally if we are to compete, even with countries such as Korea. By putting it that way, I do not intend to insult Korea. The number of academic courses and genuinely academic schools must be increased. More children must be given the opportunity to follow genuinely academic courses. That does not rule out vocational education in schools. As I know from my long experience, that is an important part of education.

As the Gracious Speech points out, teacher education and teacher training must certainly be improved. If we are to achieve that aim, those institutions must certainly be in competent hands. Lecturers must be drawn from those who have recent experience of teaching in schools. They must not have been away from it for a long period, so that they lose contact with what is needed. Teachers will need to be prepared more thoroughly than they have been so far, both academically and in the craft of the classroom, which is the basis of good teaching and sound learning.

8.39 pm

Mr. Eddie McGrady (South Down): My first pleasant duty, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is to congratulate you on your appointment and to wish you many peaceful years guiding the debates in the House. In common with other hon. Members, I have listened to many fine maiden speeches which augur well for the House in the years to come in depth both of knowledge and of compassion for the social problems that afflict these islands today.

The environment is mentioned twice in the Gracious Speech. It says that the

> "Government will work both at home and abroad to protect the environment. They will ensure that the environment remains a key issue in all policy-making".

Those undertakings contrast strongly with a lack of any commitment in the Government's programme that will address the pressing and vital environmental problems that we face, not just on earth as a whole but in our country today. In 1990 the Government announced their conversion to green issues. I should have hoped that they would have had the time and the opportunity to present to the House a strong programme for environmental protection legislation and to show that they intend to lead other nations towards environmental recovery for this generation and those to come. There do not appear to be any proposals for green legislation in the Government's programme.

It is equally disappointing that when the Prime Minister addressed the House on 6 May he did not give any commitment in respect of the great environmental issues, with the exception of a brief reference to the Rio de Janeiro conference, promising the Government's commitment to a target of returning carbon dioxide emissions to 1990 levels by the turn of the century. That is an inadequate response to the urgency of the problem. In fact, that rather poor commitment was qualified further by his statement that it would be carried out only

"provided that others will do the same."—[*Official Report*, 6 May 1992; Vol. 207, c. 73.]

Surely we should be setting an example to the world in respect of all aspects of environmental protection. If need be, we must go it alone, for the practical reason that the process of tackling these major problems must start somewhere, must be started by somebody and must start within one of the western industrialised nations.

On ozone layer depletion, the Government seem immune to the urgency indicated by their own research group. In July 1991, the stratospheric ozone review group produced a report drawing attention to the strong evidence that destruction of the ozone layer in the northern hemisphere is greater than anticipated. It stated that above Britain and Europe there had been an 8 per cent. loss of the ozone layer in the past 10 years. That report was followed in October 1991 by a report from a group of 80 international scientists working under the auspices of the

[Mr. Eddie McGrady]

United Nations environment programme and the World Meteorological Office. It produced extremely disturbing findings and the Government seem to have paid little attention to them. We are talking not about ozone depletion in some far off place such as Antarctica, but about severe and dangerous ozone depletion over northern Europe and the very islands in which we live. Surely the Government are aware from their own research groups and scientific bodies that UVB radiation will have considerable consequences for the health and welfare of the people of these islands, Europe and the entire earth. They should be striving with the maximum urgency for control of ozone-depleting gases and their withdrawal from use, not by the year 2000 but at the earliest possible opportunity. The Government should have the courage to proceed with protecting the earth, whatever the economic disadvantage. They should provide leadership and, if necessary, by moral force should show the way forward to other nations.

The Government fall far short on matters other than simply ozone layer depletion. We have heard many sympathetic comments about the destruction of the rain forests. However, it was reported not long ago that several British firms are importing rain forest timbers in contravention of the 1989 Philippines Government ban. No action has been taken. At the earth summit in June it is anticipated that the Government will be seeking international consensus on a set of principles governing the conservation of forests. Surely the Government would have a much stronger arm if they sorted out their departmental disagreements. That would provide them with the authority to go before a world convention to negotiate a legally binding forestry conservation agreement.

We must also look at the Government's record on air quality control in the United Kingdom. It has already been noted that there is poor quality air in many parts of these islands. However, the Government boast of having created six new monitoring stations, making a total of 13 sites engaged in ensuring the Government's compliance with EC directive No. 2. That should be compared with Germany where there are 200 sites monitoring air quality control. Surely that is equally important to our citizens.

There is an urgent need, which the Government have neglected, to deal with environmental problems in our own households. They should support a Bill to ban phosphates, increase the biodegradability of detergents and introduce better environmental protection labelling for the consumer. Household detergent pollution is an urgent matter crying out for Government attention.

When we look at the environmental control measures promised in the Government's election manifesto, we see that they have already reneged on the commitment to set up an environmental protection agency by postponing it until not later than 1994. When I questioned the Northern Ireland Office regarding the situation in Northern Ireland, I was told that the commitment would not be implemented until well after that date. So we are probably talking about the turn of the century. That flies in the face of a 1991 all-party report on the environment, which recommended that the environmental protection agencies should be set up immediately.

Coming from South Down, I would not do justice to the environmental problem if I did not refer to the pollution of the Irish sea and the daily emissions from Sellafield of radioactive material. That is happening as we debate tonight and has been happening for the past 40 years. The radioactive content has been reduced from what it was several years ago, when there were some horrendous emissions of highly radioactive plutonium. Modern technology is available to clean up the discharge completely and it is one of the first issues that must be tackled.

Added to that environmental pollution, we are now creating another danger. I understand that as from June this year plutonium will be exported to Japan in a specially constructed cargo ship. Ironically, the adaptations to that ship were carried out at Harland and Wolff. That ship must contain a military complement and will be escorted by a military vessel. Apart from the expense involved, I have no doubt that that trade will be dangerous for the inhabitants of these islands. I am extremely concerned that, once again, nuclear waste reprocessing is being expanded by the introduction of thermal oxide reprocessing plant this year. The Government could at least have had the decency to await the environmental impact study that was promised.

I urge the Prime Minister and his team who will attend the Rio de Janeiro conference in June to have the courage to go forward with a greatly accelerated programme, redressing all aspects of the destruction of the environment. If they do so, they will receive the massive support not only of this country but eventually of the rest of the nations of the world. It is a question of determination, foresight and leadership. I hope that the Government can rise to the challenge.

8.49 pm

Mr. John Bowis (Battersea): I wish briefly but warmly to welcome you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to your elevated office and to wish you well in the future.

Many hon. Members have referred to housing, and I want to do so briefly. The Opposition's amendment refers to omissions from the Gracious Speech. Many of those features are omissions because they are already happening —in other words, much work and money is being invested in solving the problems of homelessness and rooflessness. That is already bearing fruit in London. If the Labour party were to encourage some Labour authorities to return to use some of the empty properties within their gift, many of the problems of homelessness in London and other parts of the country could be solved. They and we could also bring into use unused premises above shops and so on.

The Gracious Speech deals with leasehold reform and rents to mortgages. I hope that the commonhold concept will soon be introduced in legislation. I hope that commonhold reform will embrace consideration of the problems that arise when a small house is divided into flats. In my constituency, it is often leaseholders of two, three or four unit blocks whose rights are abused by freeholders. I hope that my hon. Friends in the Department will bear in mind that leaseholders need the protection of commonhold as much as the occupants of larger units.

I hope that we will not forget leasehold reform of the public sector. All too often, people who bought flats from local authorities have no say in service charges, in when or

what repairs are done or in capital improvements. I believe that they should have a greater say in such decisions. I hope that will be part of the Government's leasehold reform.

I welcome the proposals on rents to mortgages, but I hope that they will not stop simply at council tenants. Public sector tenants include housing association tenants, many of whom have been allocated to housing association properties by local authorities. In that process, they often lose the right to buy. The transferable discount scheme is offered for non-charitable trusts, but in London that is a joke because most people cannot afford the property values at which the discount applies. I hope that the rent-to-mortgages concept, which is good, will apply equally to tenants in housing associations.

I agree with the hon. Member for South Down (Mr. McGrady) about the global environment, but I wish to talk briefly, too, about the domestic environment. The biggest cause of pollution in London, the motor car, is clogging our roads. We desperately need a package of measures to encourage people to use public transport. However, they will use public transport only if it is adequate. We had the great cross-party debate in London, where we threw out the consultants' proposals for major road building schemes and opted unanimously for better and more public transport. I welcome the bold statement in the Gracious Speech that there will be emphasis on providing more rail facilities to solve our problems. I gently suggest that such a proposal could be implemented quickly by bringing forward the improvements to the Northern line, by ensuring that the Hackney to Chelsea rail link travels south through Wandsworth and—this is a very domestic point—by ensuring pedestrian access to railway bridges across the Thames so that people can use the river buses, which stop only on the other side of the Thames at Chelsea as opposed to Battersea. I hope that my proposals for improving public transport will be listened to.

The other improvement in domestic pollution that I should like to see is to do with the air—by which I mean not the air that we breathe but the air through which we hear. All too often we hear far too much. Noise pollution in the inner city is one of the curses of this age. I urge my right hon. and hon. Friends to give local authorities and the police real powers to confiscate equipment and to stop noise, whether from a private residence or from a public performance. Noise is a menace to people throughout the night, and in the summer, when people wish to have their windows open, it occurs throughout the day and at weekends as well. We need urgent action on those measures.

Finally, I want to follow the hon. Member for South Down in speaking about global environment problems. There has been much discussion about the preparations for Rio related to the need for population control to preserve and conserve the assets of our planet. That is right, but we in the west must understand that often the population increases because people in the developing world do not have confidence in the survival of their children. When we can increase their confidence, family sizes will decrease and we shall begin to preserve the planet as a whole. Today, 6,000 children will die of pneumonia; 7,000 children will die of diarrhoea and dehydration diseases; and 8,000 children will die of measles, tetanus, whooping cough and diphtheria. All those deaths—a total of 21,000 today, 7·6 million this year and 38·3 million over a five-year Parliament—are avoidable for a comparatively small sum of money. If the western world, with this country playing its part, were to spend money on enabling those children to survive, the size of families would decrease.

The cost of solving the pneumonia problem is 50p per child for antibiotics; the cost of solving the diarrhoea problem is 5p for oral rehydration tablets; and the cost of solving the measles problem is sixpence ha'penny for immunisation. For £1,170 a day, 21,000 lives could be saved today; for £427,000 a year, 7·6 million could be saved; and £21·3 million could save 38·3 million lives in a five-year period. Surely that is a price worth paying when we are talking about children and families that need our support. It is a question of chicken and egg. In this case, if the young chickens are able to survive, parents will not produce so many eggs to hatch and so we will start to solve some of the global environmental population problems that face the world at Rio and beyond.

8.58 pm

Mr. Stephen Byers (Wallsend): Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for calling me to make my maiden speech in the debate on the Queen's Speech, and may I take this opportunity to extend to you my personal congratulations on your selection as Deputy Speaker.

It is appropriate for me to pay a tribute to Mr. Ted Garrett, my immediate predecessor, who retired at the general election. Ted Garrett was popular with hon. Members of all parties. He did not seek the political limelight but was happy and content to discharge his responsibilities to the constituents of Wallsend in a simple, unassuming manner. However, his constituents knew full well that if they had a grievance—no matter against whom—Ted Garrett would pursue it with tenacity until it was resolved. I only hope that in my time in the House I shall be able to discharge my responsibilities to the constituents of Wallsend in the way that he did since becoming a Member of Parliament in 1964.

The constituency of Wallsend runs from the banks of the great River Tyne northwards to the old coal mining pit villages of the south-east Northumberland coalfield. Alas, the pits are no more, but the river is still active. Swan Hunter Shipbuilders has an international reputation for producing high-quality ships on time and at a competitive price. Its success is largely due to the positive partnership created over the years between the management and the work force.

Just along the Tyne, the other major employer is Press Fabrication, an offshore yard producing modules for the offshore industry. Last year it was named as the northern business of the year—a well-deserved accolade—but such success stories are only small glimmers of light in a dark and bleak environment.

In the 1980s we lost jobs and, for those in work, incomes decreased in real terms. Because of changes to the benefit system, those receiving benefits were pushed deeper into grinding poverty. The feeling of despair and despondency in my constituency is not unique—it is shared by most constituencies in the north-east. That is why, on 9 April, those constituents—those electors—registered a massive vote of no confidence in the Government's policies. Instead, they endorsed Labour's

[Mr. Stephen Byers]

programme, which was based on care and compassion for all sections of the population, but that programme has now been denied to them.

We are debating a Queen's Speech that has more to do with envy, self-interest and greed than any concept of citizenship or community. On 9 April, more than 50 per cent. of the people who voted in the north-east voted Labour. Many of those people now believe—rightly so—that the Government have no mandate to govern the north-east. We are all aware of the current constitutional debate in Scotland. I believe that as a result of the election on 9 April a similar debate must now take place in the north-east.

I want to make one or two remarks about education. The Chinese have a proverb which says that the schools of a country are its future in miniature. I believe that to be true—we must invest in our future. But that has not happened in the past decade. An ever smaller share of our national wealth has been committed to education spending—a decline of 16 per cent. since 1979. That lack of investment has been combined with constant change in our education system. That system has been subjected to an almost permanent revolution in the classroom. As a result of that combination, our education service is now at breaking point.

The Queen's Speech refers grandly to choice, diversity and standards in education. However, what does that mean in practice if we strip away the rhetoric? The National Foundation for Educational Research has shown that reading standards in primary schools have declined dramatically over the past four or five years. We have heard today that if schools opt out of local authority control, that would raise standards. It is interesting to note that Her Majesty's inspectorate spent 300 days in opted-out schools, but no reports have been published. I have no doubt that reports would have been published if standards had risen.

The Queen's Speech refers to diversity. We know that "diversity" is a code word for selection and a return to the 11-plus—the examination that dares not speak its name. We have already heard that selection denies parental choice. That is nothing new. We have had the 11-plus and we have had selection. However, local authorities of all political controls moved against selection for good reasons. We all recognised and believed that childhood division would create a disadvantage for the majority. We cannot allow the Government to turn the clock back to the bad old days when 75 per cent. of our children were deemed failures at the age of 11.

Margaret Bondfield made her maiden speech as Member for Wallsend in 1926. She said:

"The Government appear to be trying to apply 19th century methods to a 20th century population, and it will not work".—[*Official Report*, 30 July 1926; Vol. 198, c. 2516.]

I do not believe that measures announced in the Queen's Speech will work. It fails to address the needs and realities of the 1990s. All that the Government can offer my constituents is a future made up of all their yesterdays. Our country and our people deserve better.

9.7 pm

Mr. Jonathan Evans (Brecon and Radnor): I add my congratulations to those which have been showered on you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, from both sides of the House. I also congratulate the hon. Member for Wallsend (Mr. Byers) on his maiden speech. I look forward to debating with him across the Chamber for many years to come.

When Madam Speaker called the first hon. Member to make his maiden speech during this debate on the Queen's Speech, that hon. Member said that he had been elected on his fifth attempt, something that he had in common with Madam Speaker. I have waited a little longer, although I also fought five general election campaigns before making this maiden speech.

I first stood as a Member of Parliament against the former Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Michael Foot, in the constituency then known as Ebbw Vale. I am sad that my arrival in this place coincides with his decision to depart it. Throughout the time that I have known him, he has been a man of the greatest courtesy, irrespective of our political differences.

I also have this claim to fame: at the last general election I managed to lose the Brecon and Radnor constituency by the smallest margin in the country, and I lost to Michael Foot by the largest margin. That is something to take with me. The experience of winning a seat, even by a vote as marginal as 130, is much better than losing by just 56 votes.

Politics are taken very seriously in my constituency. At the last general election the turnout in Brecon and Radnor, at 84 per cent., was the highest in the country. This time around the turnout was 86 per cent., but it is interesting to note that that was only the third highest. That shows me that there are people in my constituency who still believe that this is the cockpit of the nation, that this is where important decisions are taken, and that it is relevant and important that they should participate in elections.

My first words on being elected were of tribute to my predecessor, Mr. Richard Livsey, for all his hard work as constituency Member for Brecon and Radnor, and I am happy to repeat that tribute in this Chamber. As one would imagine from the political history of the seat, we have been keen political opponents for a considerable time, but that has never stopped us from enjoying a close friendship. I wish him well, although I hope that he decides to pursue an alternative career.

It would be remiss of me not to mention some of the other Members for Brecon and Radnor, starting with the example of constituency service set by the late Labour Member, Lord Watkins, the former Tudor Watkins, who held for Labour what is now regarded as one of the closest three-party marginals in the country for 25 years. He held the seat on the basis of the example of constituency service that he set, followed by his successor Caerwyn Roderick and then by the late Tom Hooson, whose untimely death led to the famous 1985 by-election.

It is my understanding that there has never been a one-term Member of Parliament for Brecon and Radnor and, as a supporter of tradition, I am hoping that that is a tradition that my electors will stick with. Having said that, I am aware that many hon. Members on both sides of the House and among the Liberal party have spent some considerable time campaigning in Brecon and Radnor. Most of them have come back from the constituency saying that it is one of the most beautiful, if not the most beautiful, in Britain. I know that every Member of Parliament is bound to say in this Chamber that their constituency is the most beautiful, but I can say with some force that I have support from both sides of the Chamber for that proposition.

However, my constituency has its difficulties. It has the largest proportion of the land-mass of Wales and so I suppose that I may say that I speak for more of Wales than anyone else in the Chamber. It covers more than three quarters of a million acres of Wales, stretching from the upper Swansea valley to Shropshire, and from the suburbs of Abergavenny to the hinterland of Aberystwyth. It would not fit within the curtilage of the M25 motorway, which is a sign of how vast the constituency is.

It is well known that agriculture is an important industry in the constituency, and I welcome the observations in the Queen's Speech about agricultural marketing and reform of the common agricultural policy. I hope to return to those issues in this Chamber on other occasions.

During my maiden speech I must speak more fully on housing, on the basis that a large rural area such as my constituency often has difficulty persuading people that there is a rural housing problem. I recognise that there is such a problem. Until the election was called I enjoyed the honour of being the deputy chairman of Housing for Wales, Tai Cymru, the Welsh equivalent of the Housing Corporation. I am pleased that while I was involved in the board of that corporation we were able to convince the housing establishment—the housing professionals—that there really was a housing problem. We were able to commit some 27 per cent. of all Housing Corporation expenditure in Wales to trying to resolve that problem. I am pleased to see that now the Housing Corporation in England is starting to catch up.

I am disappointed at some observations in the amendment concerning the role of local government and criticising the Government's policy on housing as though housing were to be delivered only by local government. I am rather sorry that Opposition Members pay so little attention to the role of housing associations, their major achievements in recent years and the great support that they have had from the Government. Our Housing Corporation in Wales operates in positive partnership with local authorities. Local authorities have a role, yes —not perhaps as the provider, but as the enabler. Since Housing for Wales has been established it has been a key, leading body in developing the close relationship between local authorities and the Housing Corporation that is so important.

There has been a massive expansion in resources for the housing association movement and it is important that the money is targeted better than has been the case in the past. That is why we in Wales have decided that money must be directed, yes, to where local authorities say it is needed, but on the basis of their surveys of local opinion. Often local authorities adopt the stance that they always know best. It is important that they should be involved in liaising with local groups and local communities to assess exactly what the housing needs are, so that we are sure that money spent on housing goes where it should go.

I am pleased to say that the amount of finance made available to housing associations, particularly in Wales, has increased considerably. I was pleased to see the Conservative party's commitment in its manifesto to ensuring that the figures in the public expenditure line will be commitments for the years ahead. I see my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales on the Front Bench and I say to him that I did not see any such commitment in the Welsh manifesto. I hope that there is nothing significant in that.

It is also important to recognise the role that private funding has played in the mixed financial regime with housing associations. Thirty per cent. or more of the expenditure available must come from the private sector. If it is to come, it must come on the basis of private funding being available. I congratulate the Government on commissioning a report from Hambro which, I understand, may have been in the Government's hands since January or February. So far the report has not been published. It is important that it should be published because it is necessary to take every available step to ensure that private funding exists.

I am a Welshman who has lived and worked in Wales all my life. I represent a Welsh constituency, but I am here as a Member of the United Kingdom Parliament. We have heard many remarks from Opposition Members about mandates. As a Member of this Parliament, I consider Wales to be an integral part of the United Kingdom, and I shall work during all the time that I am here to ensure that it remains so.

9.18 pm

Mr. Jack Straw (Blackburn): May I offer you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, my hearty congratulations on your appointment? You may recall that we first met 20 years ago when I was newly elected as a member of the Labour group on Islington borough council and you were leader of a rump of Conservative opposition members which had been reduced to five aldermen. My hon. Friend the Member for Wallsend (Mr. Byers) did not intend to call you Mr. Deputy Mayor, but if he had said Mr. Former Alderman, he would have been correct. We are delighted to see you in your place.

It is my happy task to congratulate the 13 hon. Members who have made maiden speeches today as well as to congratulate the hon. Member for Devizes (Mr. Ancram), who has returned to the House for a third time. He is not so much a retread as an inner tube, but his speech was entertaining none the less.

There were eight maiden speeches by Labour hon. Members, including those from my hon. Friends the Members for Cambridge (Ms. Campbell), for Cannock and Burntwood (Dr. Wright), for Walthamstow (Mr. Gerrard), for Birmingham, Yardley (Ms. Morris) and for Stockport (Ms. Coffey) who took seats from Conservative Members at the general election. The fact that those five won those seats underlines the great difference between this Parliament and the previous one. Thanks to the effectiveness of our election campaign, the Government's majority has been reduced from more than 100 to just 21.

We have heard fine speeches from all my hon. Friends. I greatly enjoyed the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Cannock and Burntwood, who spoke of the principle of alphabetical order and the way in which he suffered greatly as a result. His name begins with a W, and although mine begins with an S, I share his sense of discrimination. He also made a very important point, which the Secretary of State may wish to address, about the crisis in the recruitment of parents and other members of the public to serve as school governors. That crisis is caused by the fact that the nature of the job has changed, from one of giving support and assistance to the education of children within the school to the often unpalatable task

[Mr. Jack Straw]

of having to make cuts in budgets and deciding which teachers should be sacked or which budgets for books should be cut.

I greatly enjoyed the contribution of my hon. Friend the Member for Walthamstow, which is near to the area where I was born. He may not know—it is a little known fact—that for three weeks in 1965 my sister and I were employed full time by the Labour party to canvass the whole of the constituency as a prelude to a famous by-election win which took place some months later. I was paid the princely sum of £7 per week, and on the basis of that £21——

Mr. Pawsey: Too much.

Mr. Straw: That was before the idea of the minimum wage had even passed the lips of Labour spokespersons.

On the basis of the money I earned, I bought myself a suit. I still have that suit, and I can still get into it. *[Interruption.]* The good men and women of Marks and Spencer would be offended by the suggestion that the suit I am wearing today is 28 years old.

We heard fine speeches from my hon. Friends the Members for Yardley and for Stockport, and I shall return to them. There were also fine contributions from the hon. Members for City of Chester (Mr. Brandreth), for Sutton and Cheam (Lady Olga Maitland), for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Evans), and for Bath (Mr. Foster), as well as from the hon. Member for Belfast, North (Mr. Walker).

I also warmly congratulate the right hon. Member for Oxford, West and Abingdon (Mr. Patten) on his appointment as the new Secretary of State in the freshly renamed Department for Education. The right hon. Gentleman comes to his post with many advantages. He knows more than a little about education, but perhaps his greatest advantage is that he is not the right hon. and learned Member for Rushcliffe (Mr. Clarke), his predecessor who is now Home Secretary. Though that right hon. and learned Gentleman often entertained the House with his unusual combination of bravado and invective, the world of parents, governors, teachers and pupils, over whom he temporarily presided, was far from entertained.

The previous Secretary of State left the education service in turmoil, in a worse state even than he had found it 16 months before. He turned teacher training upside down, he pre-emptorily decided that history should end in 1963 and he planned the wholesale dismemberment of Her Majesty's inspectorate and the local inspectorate of schools, and the privatisation of what remained. Worse, he gave the impression of disinterest in the views and opinions of teachers and parents and rarely visited any state schools.

The former Secretary of State, now the Home Secretary, is, I believe, a practising agnostic. He has been seen inside a church less often than he was seen inside a school. The new Secretary of State, on the other hand, is a devout member of the Roman Catholic church and in a now celebrated article in *The Spectator*—which, fortunately for him, hit the stands after, rather than before, the election—he enlisted the assistance of the Almighty to explain away Conservative Administrations' lamentable record on law and order, namely, the doubling of crime in less than a decade. The Secretary of State said that it was all a consequence of declining church attendance and a

> "dwindling belief in redemption and damnation which has led to a loss of fear of the eternal consequences of goodness and badness."

We shall, no doubt, be hearing more about the Almighty in relation to education policy. Even now, I understand that hard-pressed teachers of disaffected adolescents in inner city schools are clamouring for hell to be officially made part of the national curriculum, most likely in exchange for craft, design and technology, and personal and social education.

In his speech on Wednesday on the Loyal Address, the Prime Minister said:

> "Our target is to raise standards, widen choice and open up opportunity for hundreds of thousands of children".—[*Official Report*, 6 May 1992; Vol. 207, c. 71.]

Opportunity, choice, standards—they are easy words to say and we can, and do, all drink to them. Their practice, however, is a great deal more difficult, and it is the likely practice of the Government's education policies and their probable consequence that I shall address tonight.

There are many policies on which there has been broad agreement in the Chamber, as with the introduction of the national curriculum and the local management of schools, and on many others there could easily be agreement, such as the rapid expansion of nursery education, for which the hon. Member for Buckingham (Mr. Walden) called in an effective speech, or the serious integration of academic and vocational qualifications.

In the time available to me today, however, I shall deal with one policy on which there is far less agreement—opting out and the extension of the grant-maintained sector. Of all Conservative education policies, none has been sold more heavily on that litany of opportunity, choice and standards than the policy of opting out. Paradoxically, of all Conservative education policies, none contains within it more potential for reducing opportunity and parental choice than opting out, while doing nothing to raise educational standards.

Why the present Administration should have turned opting out into an article of Conservative faith is beyond me. It was, it may be recalled, dreamed up in the early months of 1987 by the Downing street policy unit as no more than a crude wheeze to destabilise a few allegedly unpopular inner city Labour local education authorities. It was a policy forced on a wholly sceptical Secretary of State, the right hon. Member for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker), who publicly clashed with the then Prime Minister on its likely impact. She said that by 1991 more than half of all schools would have opted out, but the right hon. Member for Mole Valley wisely predicted that only a few schools would opt out of the local authority system.

Despite the cynical enticement of schools named for closure then being offered opt-out as a salvation—despite the naked bribery of opt-out schools—by the last election, only 200 schools, less than 1 per cent., had opted out of the local authority system, and most of those were to be found in a handful not of Labour authorities but of low-spending Conservative authorities.

Opting out has now moved up from wheeze to dogma, with Tory Members and the Conservative press openly encouraging an avalanche of opting out, with the end of local democratic involvement in the school system as we know it. The Secretary of State said yesterday that he

anticipated that the floodgates for opting out were now open, but *The Daily Telegraph* wrote in an editorial last Wednesday:

"A serious policy vacuum is becoming apparent at the heart of the Government's policies for secondary education."

It went on:

"Unless it is addressed soon, the opting-out process could become anarchic and thereby discredited."

That policy vacuum exists because of a central problem which the Secretary of State's predecessor and the Prime Minister have repeatedly ducked. The question is what kind of system will schools be opting into, not that from which they will be opting out. What lies beyond the floodgates of which the Secretary of State spoke yesterday is turbulence, uncertainty and territory that is unknown, not calm, charted waters. In that territory schools and their pupils could easily become the casualties. The wider the floodgates and the more schools opt out, the less will the past be any guide to the future.

I shall deal with five linked issues: cash, selection, parental choice, administration and standards. Roman Catholic bishops held a conference 10 days ago during which they expressed their deep unease about the prospects for opting out. The bishops said:

"We are deeply opposed to the considerable imbalances in funding brought about by the administration of the grant maintained school system, and we shall press for the removal of preferential funding for such schools."

When opting out was first put before the House five years ago, solemn undertakings were given by Ministers and by the then Prime Minister that local education authority schools and opt-out schools would be treated in a financially neutral way. As opting out began to flop, bribes were offered by Ministers and were taken.

Most schools which have opted out so far have done so simply for the money. The average sized secondary school has been at least £155,000 better off in its first year as a result of opting out, with capital funding running at twice the rate for local authority schools. Some of the extra cash has been taken directly from other LEA schools, which has impoverished them, but much has come from extra Exchequer expenditure. Immoral such bribes may have been, but with opting out on such a scale their costs were easily absorbable.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): Does the hon. Gentleman accept that it is not surprising that there were additional capital grants for some schools in the county of Lancashire, schools which had been grossly starved of funds and which therefore had to make up a great deal of leeway? Those schools, two of which are in my constituency, had been starved over the years by Lancashire county council. Having had the wisdom to opt out, they are now receiving the money that previously had been devoted to administration and democracy in county hall. They are now doing exceptionally well. Many such schools would not have received a bean from the county.

Mr. Straw: The hon. Lady is right to say that three or four schools out of hundreds that have opted out in Lancashire were starved of cash for their capital building needs. Where she is wrong—she knows this—is in suggesting that Lancashire county council is responsible. She came with me on deputation after deputation to Ministers, and she knows that it was the Conservative Government who starved the schools of funds, not the failure of Lancashire county council.

The question raised by the Catholic bishops and the question now being raised by governors, parents and local authorities throughout the land is whether the bribes can continue. I put the question to the Secretary of State, and I ask him to answer it. If, as the Government predict, 2,000 more schools opt out, that will cost the Exchequer—I leave aside the moneys that will be taken from local authorities and local authority schools—an extra £300 million. If another 4,000 schools opt out, that will cost the Exchequer another £600 million. Does that money exist? Are schools which now opt out to be offered the same level of bribes —"financial incentives", to use the Prime Minister's words —that schools have been offered in the past? I offer the Secretary of State the opportunity to explain. Come on —answer the question! This is a crucial issue for every school in the land. If the Secretary of State is unwilling to answer now, he had better answer in the course of his speech, because parents and governors have a right to know whether the same sort of bribes that have hitherto been offered will continue in the future.

A second issue, even more important than whether the level of financial incentives will continue, is selection. An increase in opting out will inexorably lead to greater selection at 11, since the schools and not the local education authorities will make the selection. Some grant-maintained schools have made it explicit that they want to turn from being comprehensives to being grammar schools. In any area we may rapidly see the creation of a rigid hierarchy of schools, with favoured, well-funded opt-outs at the top—grammar schools in all but name—and a second tier of council schools, secondary moderns or no hope schools, to use the words of *The Daily Telegraph*, at the bottom.

Time and again, during the election campaign and before, I pressed the former Secretary of State to say whether this two-tier system—this recreation of the secondary modern schools—was what the Conservative party wanted. Time and again he dodged the issue, but whether and how children are given their life chances at 11 cannot be a matter for agnosticism. Nor, as *The Daily Telegraph* witheringly commented in the same editorial, can the Government

"maintain its pretence of neutrality over the future of comprehensives by implying that it is simply allowing a hundred flowers to bloom".

Selection was never mentioned in the Tories' manifesto, yet selection at 11 there will be if opting out becomes the norm—and it will be far less fair and far more random selection than ever it was under the 11-plus. That, too, was a point made by the Catholic bishops, who said that

"Grant-maintained status would bring a random return to selection, which leads to the neglect of the less able or disadvantaged children."

The Secretary of State should also recognise a point in the powerful speech by his hon. Friend the Member for Buckingham (Mr. Walden), who said that if the Government continue to have no clear policy on whether they favour comprehensive schools or some sort of explicit selection, the consequence will be random selection and a primitive and disorganised policy from which the Conservatives will be the losers.

As the local authority system breaks up and as competition between schools intensifies, so, too, will parental choice decrease. As my hon. Friend the Member for Yardley pointed out, parents will no longer choose schools—schools will choose parents. In the four years since the Education Reform Act 1988, the proportion of

[Mr. Straw]

parents successfully getting their first choice of school has fallen, and in areas with large numbers of schools which have already opted out, the anarchy predicted by *The Daily Telegraph* has already occurred. In the Tory borough of Bromley in London, where eight schools have opted out, 225 pupils and their parents have thus far had no choice of school because it has been impossible to offer them a choice under that authority due to the multiple applications to the opted-out schools now outside the authority's control. As *The Times* commented in an editorial,

"to pretend that the selective opt-out structure emerging as government policy has anything to do with parental choice is a deception".

Then there is the issue of the future administration of secondary schools. Opting out will result in the nationalisation of the school system—in its central takeover by Whitehall. But schools are not islands; their provision must be planned and financed and if not by local authorities, then by whom? Are we to expect under the terms of the much promised White Paper that Whitehall officials will administer the whole school system, or are we to expect appointed boards packed with Conservative place men and women, as happened with health authorities and NHS trusts? The Secretary of State had better tell us in his wind-up speech.

Lastly, the largest question of all: what is the purpose of the journey into the unknown that mass opting out will entail? For Labour, the only test of any education policy is whether it will increase choice and opportunity and raise the standards of education for every child. However, as my hon. Friend the Member for Wallsend pointed out, there is no evidence that the opting out that has occurred so far has led to higher standards.

Her Majesty's inspectors have spent 300 days on greater and more intensive inspection of grant-maintained schools in their four years of existence than any local authority schools have ever enjoyed. Yet, despite more than three years' intensive HMI attention, not one report has been published by HMI on grant-maintained schools. If those HMI visits and reports spelled out that opting out was leading to higher standards than would otherwise be the case, one can bet that the Government would have published those reports. They have shrouded those reports in secrecy, because they know the truth—that opting out has led to no discernible improvement in education standards. Nor can it. What it has done is to lead to a divided system, a two-tier system, and selection by the back door.

One point on which we should all agree is that standards of education in Britain for many children are not so high as they are in many comparable countries and not so high as they could and should be. Where the Government's policies are likely to lead to an increase in standards and an increase in choice and opportunities for every child, those policies will have our support. But where those policies seek to create a future out of a discredited past, they will have our relentless opposition.

In the article in *The Spectator* entitled

"There is a choice—good or evil",

the Secretary of State opened with the touching words:

"I believe in God. I worry about Him. I think that He probably worries about me."

The Secretary of State is not the only one, and he had better understand that his actions will be judged not only by the Almighty in the world to come, but by parents, teaches, governors and pupils in this world who want an end to underfunding, an end to pay-as-you-learn, and an end to double standards, and who want instead real investment and the choice and opportunity which come from delivering the highest standards of education to every child.

9.41 pm

The Secretary of State for Education (Mr. John Patten): I rise in what I understand in footballing parlance is called injury time, with 19 minutes to go to reply to the debate.

During the afternoon, Madam Speaker, your ears must have been burning while hon. Member after hon. Member paid you compliments in your absence. They will all be there in *Hansard* tomorrow for you to read at breakfast.

We have had a remarkable number of maiden speeches of extremely high quality. The debate started off as a bit of a heritage trail around Britain's historic cities, kicked off by the hon. Member for Cambridge (Ms. Campbell), followed by the hon. Member for Bath (Mr. Foster) and completed by my hon. Friend the Member for City of Chester (Mr. Brandreth)—a sort of Baedeker tour of the tourist spots of the United Kingdom.

I greatly appreciated the graceful remarks made by the hon. Member for Cambridge about Sir Robert Rhodes James, as I am sure did others. The hon. Members for Coventry, North-East (Mr. Ainsworth) and for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Cunningham), neither of whom would claim a major part in the tourist guides for their constituencies—*[Interruption.]*—no, not because of the damage caused to the Baedeker guides but because of the damage that the Baedeker raids did to Coventry during the second world war. Both hon. Members spoke with great feeling about their constituencies and I congratulate them on what they said.

The hon. Member for Cannock and Burntwood (Dr. Wright) made some exceptionally interesting remarks, including showing a bit of independence, saying that he supported some of the Government's education legislation. The hon. Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Gerrard) was extremely generous about his predecessor, Hugo Summerson. The hon. Member for Birmingham, Yardley (Ms. Morris) was equally generous about David Gilroy Bevan and the victor in Stockport over the Liberals was very generous—*[Interruption.]*—over the Conservatives: we lost the seat. That was a deliberate mistake put in to ensure that hon. Members are learning the constituencies. We shall miss Tony Favell very much indeed. The hon. Member for Wallsend (Mr. Byers) has come here with a reputation for being a bit of a left-winger, so my north-eastern spies tell me. Such people are to be cherished in these revisionist times.

After the hon. Member for Bath, we heard from my hon. Friend the Member for City of Chester, who comes to the House with a reputation for humour, and he sustained it in his excellent maiden speech. My hon. Friend the Member for Woodspring (Dr. Fox) spoke fluently without notes—a talent that was explained by his fellow countryman, my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth), as owing to the fact that he is Scottish.

My hon. Friend the Member for Woodspring was followed by another Scot, my hon. Friend the Member for Devizes (Mr. Ancram), who spoke fluently and warmly about his constituency. My hon. Friend the Member for Sutton and Cheam (Lady Olga Maitland) paid tribute not only to Sir Neil Macfarlane but to two remarkable residents of Cheam—the legendary Tony Hancock and Harry Secombe.

Finally, my hon. Friend the Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Evans), who scored a famous victory—and I will get it right this time—over the Liberals, also spoke without notes, showing that Welsh Members of Parliament can do that as well as Scottish right hon. and hon. Members who come south of the border.

We were fortunate this afternoon to hear maiden speeches of such quality.

I cannot refer in the short amount of injury time available to me to all the other interventions, but they included some frightening words from my right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins) about the future of Select Committees. I guess that wiser persons than myself listened with some trembling to his remarks. My right hon. Friend the Member for Woking (Mr. Onslow) said clearly that the Opposition were out of touch in their opposition to grant-maintained schools—and so they are. That view was echoed in the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway).

We heard a couple of notable and thought-provoking interventions by my hon. Friends the Members for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) and for Buckingham (Mr. Walden). I imagine that I will be debating with them a great deal in the coming years.

Before turning to Labour's contribution to the debate, I shall refer briefly to the Liberal Democrats. It might be worth dwelling for a moment or two on the lamentable condition of their party, which, having been rebuffed by the British electorate, is now making advances to the poor old Labour party. Labour needs the amorous advances of the Liberal Democrats like a vegetarian needs a plate of raw meat. I suspect that if there is ever a coming together, it will be the Liberals who are gobbled up.

I have nothing against individual Liberal Members of Parliament. Some of them are rather nice. I am surprised that many of them remain in the Liberal party. For many months, I thought that the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell), with his cutaway collars and striped shirts, was a member of the Conservative party, and I bought him a number of drinks on that basis.

There is also that nice teenage president of the Liberal Democrats, the hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye (Mr. Kennedy). I would like the party's deputy leader to pass on to that hon. Gentleman the information that if he chooses to cross the Floor of the House, I am authorised to offer him a job as my assistant Parliamentary Private Secretary. I have nothing against any Liberal Members of Parliament, and certainly not against our newcomer, the hon. Member for Bath.

The general election campaign did, however, provide one service to the public: it revealed for the first time to a wider audience the true face—and a very disagreeable face it is too, being unpleasant, personal and vindictive—of the more extreme Liberal activists in this country. It is a very ugly face indeed. They tormented my hon. Friend the Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth (Mr. Dickens) with personal attacks of a most shameful kind. My hon. Friend is a big enough man to deal with them, but he is still suffering—he is unable to be here this evening.

Those of my right hon. and hon. Friends who went to Cheltenham during the campaign came back reporting the insidious drip, drip of innuendo. "Vote for the local man," the Liberals said. Then there were the disgraceful scenes in Bath. I am sure that the new Member for Bath—whom I congratulate on his election victory—dissociates himself completely from those. There was organised chanting, and organised shouting down of our former right hon. Friend Christopher Patten. That was a blot on the whole election campaign.

Madam Speaker: Order. I should like to hear more about the amendment now.

Mr. Patten: You know what it is like with inexperienced Secretaries of State, Madam Speaker. I shall now deal with the amendment, but I hope that my hon. Friends will remember what I have said.

The hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) was very cheerful. I appreciated his speech: it was an extremely good speech, with some good jokes. That is perhaps all the more remarkable because at present it cannot be much fun being a Labour party member concerned with Labour education or environmental policy.

Whoever wins the great Labour leadership battle, there may well be a reshuffle of responsibilities. I am sure that the hon. Member for Blackburn will play a starring role whatever happens; it is the question of who may succeed as Opposition education spokesman that worries me. I have heard ugly rumours that it may be the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott). That would be a serious matter.

Certainly, we shall not know for a long time what Labour's three Rs are. Will the Labour party be attracted by reading, writing and retrenchment, under the austere hand of the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith); or by the reading, writing and radicalism of the deeply dangerous hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould)? We shall have to wait and see. All I know is that the Labour party has been spared the reading, writing and revolution promised by the hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone).

Whatever the direction in which the new leader of the party takes Labour's education policies, it will presumably be a case of a new set of three Rs. It will be "retreat, retreat, retreat" from every radical Labour policy on to Conservative ground. That will happen time after time. As experience has shown us over the past 13 years, what is outrageously conservative one year in education policy is Labour party policy in the next manifesto. That has happened time and again.

The hon. Member for Blackburn talks of the Conservative party's record on education. I am very happy to talk about our record. Our schools are being transformed: the facts speak for themselves. The national curriculum is transforming pupils' expectations and ensuring that all children have the core education that they deeply deserve. That is true equality of opportunity—Conservative equality of opportunity.

Examination results are getting better and better. Record numbers of our young people—this point should not be diminished by Opposition Members—are now staying on after the age of 16. Record numbers of people

[Mr. Patten]

are now training to become teachers, and local management of schools is liberating schools up and down the country. I do not know of a single school with LMS, let alone grant-maintained status, that wishes to return to the bad old days of local authority domination.

Choice and diversity have now become a reality for increasing numbers of parents and their children, exactly as my hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth predicted all those years ago. Grant-maintained schools are a hit with parents. A revolution is beginning to sweep across the education landscape of the country. I should be happy to arrange a visit to any grant-maintained school in the country for the hon. Member for Blackburn and his Front-Bench team: it is clear that they need to be educated in excellence, which is what Conservative party policy is about.

I expect the revolution in our schools to gather pace in the years to come. I expect our schools, when all the reforms have been fully implemented, to be the envy of the western world. I want parents to be able to enjoy real choice, real diversity and higher expectations for their children. I expect them to play their part by helping their schools in many different ways. I certainly expect to see an ever-increasingly skilled and educated work force.

Above all else, however, as a result of our curriculum reforms and testing, I expect our children to do two things. I guess that the first will be laughed at by the Opposition, but I intend to explain what it is. I expect children to go to school throughout their school career and to stay there to be educated. I am simply not prepared to allow truancy levels to remain at the level at which they are now. What is the point of having good teachers, fine schools and all that public expenditure if children are not at school to enjoy that experience? Secondly, I expect our children to be taught to think for themselves, to read and to write properly, to spell and to do their sums—all the fundamental aims of a good education system.

Further thoughts about the structure of education will be made clear in the White Paper that I am now writing, which will be brought before the House in due course. Undoubtedly, it will be opposed by the Labour party on publication date, but it will be Labour party policy 18 months later—as it always is. Every time that we have introduced constructive proposals to improve education, the Labour party has opposed them and then changed its mind.

Look at the Labour party's record. In 1987, Labour claimed that we wanted to introduce a national curriculum only in order to give us a monopoly of thought in education. A few years later the national curriculum is Labour party policy. Look at tests. The Labour party said that tests would lead to arrogance or failure. Now it wants them. Testing is part of Labour policy. Local management of schools was condemned during the fun-filled 1989 Labour party conference. Hands up any Labour Member who remembers that with pride. I cannot see anyone doing so. Now the Labour party supports it.

Then there is opting-out. Just five weeks ago the Labour party made a pledge to ditch all our education reforms. Grant-maintained schools, local management of schools and city technology colleges would all be thrown out of the window. Now, five weeks later, after the Labour party's fourth general election defeat, revisionism has set in. Its leading education adviser, Professor Tim Brighouse, Professor of Education at Keele university, says that Labour should ditch its traditional commitment to comprehensives, let state schools develop in their own way and fund an increasing number of assisted places. Just five weeks after the election! I rubbed my eyes in disbelief.

I was not sure what the Labour party's official response would be, but one of the Labour party's spokesmen on schools was quoted yesterday in one of our great national newspapers as saying that Professor Brighouse's ideas were very sparky and deserved attention. There are a lot more sparky ideas coming from our side of the Chamber.

Because the Queen's Speech has been prepared by a Conservative Government, we have been spared the tired and reactionary programme that the Labour party would have given us. Had the Labour party been sitting on this side of the Chamber now, it would have been repealing the rates and beginning to renationalise industries such as the water industry that my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment took so successfully into private ownership when he was Minister of State. The citizens charter would have been torn up on the first day of a Labour Government, with its commitment to public services of a high quality. Worst of all, the most important and fundamental social reforms of the last quarter of this century—our education and health reforms—would have been torn up and ditched. By the end of this Parliament, the British people, not the Conservative party, will have decided that those reforms are truly irreversible.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 292, Noes 323.

Division No. 2] **[9.59 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane	Caborn, Richard
Adams, Mrs Irene	Callaghan, Jim
Ainger, Nicholas	Campbell, Ms Anne *(C'bridge)*
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*	Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Allen, Graham	Campbell, Ronald *(Blyth V)*
Alton, David	Cambell-Savours, D. N.
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*	Canavan, Dennis
Anderson, Ms Janet	Cann, James
Armstrong, Hilary	Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Ashton, Joe	Chisholm, Malcolm
Austin-Walker, John	Clapham, Michael
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*	Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Barnes, Harry	Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Barron, Kevin	Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Battle, John	Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Bayley, Hugh	Coffey, Ms Ann
Beckett, Margaret	Cohen, Harry
Beggs, Roy	Connarty, Michael
Beith, A. J.	Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Bell, Stuart	Corbett, Robin
Benn, Rt Hon Tony	Corbyn, Jeremy
Bennett, Andrew F.	Corston, Ms Jean
Benton, Joe	Cousins, Jim
Bermingham, Gerald	Cox, Tom
Berry, Roger	Cryer, Bob
Betts, Clive	Cummings, John
Blair, Tony	Cunliffe, Lawrence
Blunkett, David	Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Boateng, Paul	Cunningham, Dr John *(C'p'l'nd)*
Boyce, Jimmy	Dafis, Cynog
Boyes, Roland	Dalyell, Tam
Bradley, Keith	Darling, Alistair
Bray, Dr Jeremy	Davidson, Ian
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*	Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*	Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*	Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Burden, Richard	Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Byers, Stephen	Denham, John

Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Enright, Derek
Etherington, William
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Foster, Derek *(B'p Auckland)*
Foster, Donald *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Gapes, Michael
Garrett, John
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harvey, Nick
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate *(Vauxhall)*
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoff
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hutton, John
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Ms Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Ms Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Ms Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Ms Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross, C & S)*
Kennedy, Ms Jane *(L'p'l Br'g'n)*
Khabra, Piara
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
MacDonald, Calum
McFall, John
McGrady, Eddie
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Maginnis, Ken
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
Olner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew' E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Ms Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Smith, Llewellyn *(Blaenau G'nt)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Ms Rachel *(D'mline W)*
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Tipping, Paddy
Trimble, David
Tyler, Paul
Vaz, Keith
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Walker, Rt Hon Harold
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow C)*
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Wicks, Malcolm H
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Anthony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Ken Eastham and
Mr. Eric Illsley.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chaplin, Mrs Judith
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, William
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcliffe)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'shire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Niranjan
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael

Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, John Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam
Fox, Sir Marcus
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gallie, Philip
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Ms Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nicholas
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heath, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W H'f'rdshire)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Ms Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Major, Rt Hon John
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'xl'yh'ath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. Sydney Chapman.

Question accordingly negatived.
Main Question again proposed.
It being after Ten o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.
Debate to be resumed tomorrow.

Education Facilities (Mid Glamorgan)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Arbuthnot.]*

10.18 pm

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): Unfortunately, lack of time allows me—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Will right hon. and hon. Members who are leaving the Chamber do so quickly and quietly?

Mr. Rogers: Unfortunately, lack of time allows me to deal only with the problems facing the education service in Mid Glamorgan. However, I do not want to create the impression that the education service is not providing the citizens with what it has always provided them. Mid Glamorgan, as with Glamorgan before it, has provided the highest standard of education notwithstanding the enormous social and economic difficulties that we have faced as a consequence of our industrial history.

I want first to pay tribute on behalf of myself and my colleagues to the skill and dedication of everyone involved in the education service in the county over the years. Two types of difficulty face us in Mid Glamorgan—those difficulties which are general to all local education authorities, and those peculiar to Mid Glamorgan and the valley authorities of south Wales. General underfunding of the public education service is the problem faced and shared with other local education authorities. For example, on capital financing, Mid Glamorgan's capital building programme averages £6 million to £8 million in any one year, on a revenue budget of £240 million. No business of that size can properly exist on such a low level of capital investment—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. I wish to hear the hon. Gentleman. Madam Speaker has already made it clear that Members should be quiet.

Mr. Rogers: That is why we have old, badly maintained schools which are unsuitable, in design and layout, for modern teaching methods and for the delivery of the national curriculum upon which so much emphasis is placed by the Government.

Funding per pupil is the other aspect of funding which is of vital importance. Even allowing for the different basis for funding of the state and the private sector, the funding level per pupil is 50 per cent. higher for the private sector, which is reflected in better buildings, better staffing ratios and smaller class sizes, as well as salaries above the norm.

Much of Mid Glamorgan suffered in the inter-war years. Outward migration and a declining population meant that there was little school building in the 1920s and 1930s. Consequently, our schools are either pre-1917 or post-1950. Both types present maintenance problems. The old schools require extensive improvement if they are to deliver the national curriculum, and the Minister of State knows that very well. The newer schools, which were built to rigid Government-prescribed cost limits, resulted in flat roofs, system building and, in some cases, storage heating rather than central heating systems. That has landed the authority with considerable maintenance problems as the cheaply built structures deteriorate. That category includes most of the large secondary schools in the county area.

More than half of the authority's primary schools are pre-first world war, and they are often located in subsidence areas. Maintenance costs are high and the national curriculum has highlighted the lack of a water supply in classrooms, combined with inadequacies in electrical wiring systems and power points, which are necessary for the delivery of science and technology teaching. In the three years between 1990 and 1993 the LEA will have to invest £1·6 million of its own funds to carry out that work. The Government are not prepared to put in any extra money for that provision.

Welsh-medium education is one of the local authority's successes. Each year a new Welsh-medium primary school is opened. There are four Welsh-medium secondary schools in Mid Glamorgan. No other local authority in Wales can match Mid Glamorgan in its provision of Welsh-medium education, but that is not recognised in the capital allocations. There has been no Government recognition of the fact that the opening of a Welsh-medium school with a wide catchment area has little impact on the size of any English-medium school in the area. Welsh-medium schools create an additional demand for accommodation, which is not recognised in the capital grant.

Our county is a deprived area by any and every definition. The educational difficulties in the schools receive no Government recognition, in exactly the same way—oddly enough—that the health service in Glamorgan is not funded on the basis of deprivation factors, as a former Minister acknowledged in a debate some time ago.

Between the levels of special needs children, whom I shall return to later, and of achievers there is a large group of the school population which shows no motivation and has little parental support for educational development. The county has pleaded unsuccessfully for recognition of that.

Then there is the consequent drain on educational funding in the provision of a high level of free meals, clothing grants and so on. Instead, the Government face us with raw league tables by which schools are to be measured. No attempt is made to compensate for the fact that many pupils are deprived from birth of the richness of language, reading materials, educational play materials and parental support.

The local education authority has pioneered nationally a scheme of home-school support teachers, but that is limited by a lack of resources. Although the authority comes high up on the national scale of nursery provision, yet again there is a shortfall of resources which makes it impossible to meet demand within existing budget levels.

I should like to talk briefly about special needs and the poor, unfortunate children who must overcome multiple physical and mental handicaps simply to cope with the ordinary process of living. Many special schools in Mid Glamorgan have inherited their buildings from the old training centres when children with severe learning difficulties were considered uneducable. The buildings as a result are wholly unsuitable in terms of space and design to deliver a broad curriculum. The capitation allowance for special needs pupils is pitifully small. All special apparatus, minibuses, special chairs, standing frames and hydrotherapy pools are financed by private funds raised by the community and committed staff who are often exhausted by the extra fund-raising ventures during evenings and weekends.

Dr. Kim Howells (Pontypridd): I should like to pay tribute to my hon. Friend for his superb work in the Rhondda in special needs education. Today I spoke to the headmaster of Bryncelynog comprehensive school, Mr. John Lloyd, who told me that he was desperately worried about the future of special needs education. Likewise, Mrs. Diane Johns, the headmistress of Pentyrch primary school. Does my hon. Friend agree that superb pioneering work in special needs education has been done in Mid Glamorgan? The prospects, however, are that schools will be opted out and there will be no provision whatever for this vital area of education. The staff and, I am sure, the parents of children with special needs are worried sick about that.

Mr. Rogers: My hon. Friend is right. Teachers of special needs pupils face the greatest problems of all. Anyone who visits a special school will see the caring, loving way that the staff deal with children with epilepsy, cerebal palsy or Down's syndrome, and how the children enjoy themselves and become involved. It is an experience to go to one of the concerts that the Rhondda special school puts on to raise money. I urge the Minister to come to one and to recognise the needs of those children. They need extra resources, for example, for transport to school. The LEA is forced to accept the lowest tender which takes no account of the pupils' special needs and disabilities—for example, whether a child is epileptic or requires a special harness or lift to get on and off the vehicle. The Government always insist on the authority accepting the cheapest tender.

The same applies to school meals. The pupils by the nature of their handicaps must stay at school all day. There was a time when the resources were available and the meals were cooked on the premises so that account could be taken of special problems, diets and feeding difficulties. Obviously, some must be individually fed. Now cooking cannot be done on the premises because there are not the resources to maintain that facility. Instead, pre-cooked meals must be brought in.

There is a lack of speech therapists in Mid Glamorgan. It is incredible that over the past year there has not been one speech therapy lesson in the Rhondda special school. How appalling it is to have a special school without a speech therapist. It has been suggested that there is an immediate need for 10 additional speech therapists in Mid Glamorgan, but just one is available. The same is true of physiotherapists, educational psychologists and other support services. The health authority is supposed to provide those services to the education authority, but it, too, does not have sufficient resources. A further £100,000 would be required to reach the nationally prescribed ratio for educational psychologists.

It is clear that Mid Glamorgan is suffering from specific difficulties over and above those that it shares with other authorities. Even so, the local education authority is £8 million above the Secretary of State's standard spending assessment. If Mid Glamorgan's SSA was reduced as a result of charge capping, the effect on the education service would be devastating. The authority would fall even further behind in its attempts to meet our people's needs.

I was appalled at the standard of the speech tonight of the new Secretary of State for Education. If he can deal with such an important debate in such a trivial manner, education is in a parlous state. I despair of that right hon. Gentleman accepting a constructive argument from me—I hope that I do better with the Minister of State at the Welsh Office.

I am concerned about the possible opting out of schools that apply for grant-maintained status. There are five comprehensive schools in my constituency. The opt-out proposal fills me with alarm, especially as those schools will have the ability to select their pupils across the existing catchment boundaries. The first school in the Rhondda that opts out can choose a process of selection that need not be based on educational standards or aptitude—at least the old 11-plus purported to do that. Selection could possibly be dictated by a child's family and social background. Schools could develop an elitist system of selection whereby a child could be rejected, regardless of his abilities, because of his family and social background. Can one imagine the chain reaction in the other four comprehensive schools in Mid Glamorgan? Which one of those schools would end up as the ghetto for those who did not have a place to go to? Is such a process supposed to create the classless society? Such divisiveness would destroy the closely knit valley communities as no other policy that even the Government introduced could manage. I hope that a separate approach is adopted towards education in Wales which recognises our unique needs.

I would rather not raise the matter of the award of the school cleaning contract in Mid Glamorgan, but I must do so because it is causing great concern. That contract is worth £10 million and it has been awarded to a company called Taylorplan. Unfortunately, its chairman is a Labour peer, Lord Parry of Neyland. The Minister must monitor that company because it intends to sack 20 per cent. of the existing work force—about 400 people. That might well mean that the company is unable to fulfil its contract.

There was a time when people would take the job of school cleaner to earn pin money. In the valley communities today the unemployment level stands at 20 per cent. and in some of those communities a wife working at a school needs the money—it is not a good wage even in the current situation—to maintain, not supplement, the family economy.

Taylorplan evidently specialises in bidding low to obtain tenders. It has made losses ever since it started in business and it has had solvency and cash flow problems. Councils and district health authorities have been wary of it. I understand from Mid Glamorgan that it vetted the company closely on financial and performance indicators. In January 1989, Croydon council described it as "a high-risk company" and it insisted that its Australian parent company should give an unconditional guarantee of financial support. Westminster council—that great Socialist authority up the road—was told in February 1988 by the city treasurer that he had reservations about accepting Taylorplan's tender because, he said, it involved a greater than usual degree of risk.

Taylorplan has been paying on its contract £2·40 an hour to cleaners in Suffolk. In Warwickshire, it was paying £2·80 an hour. In Kingston-upon-Thames, its workers were not receiving sick pay and no holiday pay was given to cleaners. It pulled out of its contract with Suffolk county council after only three months. The contract was to involve cleaning 19 schools, but the company ran into problems. The schools were not being properly cleaned.

I could give a long catalogue of incidents. For example, at Airedale general hospital, inspections found insects, cobwebs, dust, impacted dirt, urine-stained chairs and dirty windows on wards. Carpets that should have been shampooed had not been cleaned for long periods.

Lord Parry is a member of my political party and is chairman and a director of that company. My hon. Friends and colleagues in Mid Glamorgan feel that it is inappropriate for a Labour peer who espouses a commitment to fairness and supports the statutory minimum wage to be associated in the way I have described. I challenge Lord Parry and his company to give an undertaking to the 1,500 cleaners in Mid Glamorgan that he will maintain proper wage levels and jobs. Either the county has been managing the situation hopelessly or the company is unable to fulfil its contract without a reduction in the work force of more than 20 per cent.

The company must maintain proper standards. Our children have enough handicaps and problems to overcome. We do not want them to be educated in filthy schools. If the company, under the Government's privatisation directives, is to receive such contracts, the Minister of State, who is responsible for education in Wales, must monitor matters and ensure that the contracts are being performed to a proper standard. If not, the company must go immediately.

I do not have time to raise many other problems that we face in Mid Glamorgan. Many of those problems could be resolved with a marginal increase in resources. The problems have been clearly identified. The provision of extra resources is the only way to solve them. I ask the Minister to put his money where his party has been putting its mouth in recent months, and properly to fund the education service in Mid Glamorgan.

10.37 pm

The Minister of State, Welsh Office (Sir Wyn Roberts): I congratulate the hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) on his safe return to this place and on his success in raising this issue on the Adjournment.

I will deal first with the hon. Gentleman's last point —the Mid Glamorgan cleaning contract. It is for the authority to be satisfied that the standards that it requires of contractors are clearly set out in contract specifications and that adequate monitoring arrangements are in place. If contractors fall below those standards, it is open to the authority to seek redress in the normal way. I stress that it is the responsibility of the relevant authority to ensure that it receives the service for which it is paying.

The hon. Gentleman has chosen a wide-ranging subject and has covered a number of issues. I doubt whether I shall be able to answer all the points that he raised. I shall read his speech in *Hansard* and, if necessary, cover in correspondence any points that I am unable to deal with in my reply.

The hon. Gentleman spoke about school buildings in Mid Glamorgan, and I appreciate some of his concerns. Over the years, since I have had responsibility for education, I have visited many schools in Mid Glamorgan. I shall be visiting the area again next Tuesday, when I hope to visit Ysgol Gyfun Rhydfelen, at the school's request, to see the condition of the buildings.

There is no doubt that over the years local education authorities have not invested sufficient funds in maintaining their education estate and that they have built up a considerable backlog of maintenance. The exact extent of the backlog is not known, but work by the education authorities following the efficiency circles initiative of my right hon. and learned Friend the former Secretary of State should enable them to determine the size of the task that they have set themselves through lack of investment.

Recently prepared information suggests that Mid Glamorgan had about £9 million worth of outstanding maintenance in 1987, and that by 1991 this had risen to about £18 million. My officials meet the education authorities every year to discuss their capital spending programmes. They also inquire about the levels of maintenance spending, but this is not always easy for the education authorities to determine, especially if maintenance is carried out through a central organisation rather than through the education building programme.

Mr. Rogers: Will the Minister give way?

Sir Wyn Roberts: The hon. Gentleman has left me only 10 minutes in which to reply. I am seeking to provide him with information.

Most problems are seen in schools which were system built 20 to 30 years ago, or in very old school buildings. There is no doubt that a large proportion of Mid Glamorgan schools fall into those categories. Central Government contribute towards county councils' capital spending by issuing approvals to borrow. In our planning for local authority spending we also take into account councils' past histories of supporting capital spending from their revenue accounts. This support is not, generally, directed at specific schemes or to particular service areas. In other words, we do not tell local authorities how to spend their resources, and it is for them to decide how to allocate them between services in the light of their own needs and priorities.

The level of potential capital investment that the Government plan for Welsh local education authorities is sufficient for them to meet their obligations according to their own priorities. In recent years, substantial increases in gross provision for education have been made. Between 1985-86 and 1991-92, capital resources notionally made available to LEAs for education building increased in real terms by no less than 38 per cent. Last year, the overall gross provision for education capital was £66·6 million. This year we have provided for gross capital expenditure by the LEA of about £63 million. That sum would have been higher but for the transfer of higher education from the local education authorities. Capital support for the higher education sector in this year has been set at almost £5·6 million. These figures reflect the high priority that the Government have given to the improvement of schools. It must be said, however, that local education authorities collectively have chosen to spend less than the Government have provided for in the past few years by 4·6 per cent. in 1989-90, 3·5 per cent. in 1990-91, and an estimated 15 per cent. in 1991-92, amounting to nearly £10 million.

Mr. Rogers: Mid Glamorgan?

Sir Wyn Roberts: The hon. Gentleman has referred to Mid Glamorgan, and the figures that I have given are for the whole of Wales. I understand, however, that Mid Glamorgan has been spending about the notional allocation.

[Sir Wyn Roberts]

Of course, capital spending is not the full picture, especially as much maintenance work can be carried out from revenue accounts, and in 1991-92 education authorities budgeted to spend almost 30 per cent. more——

Mr. Ted Rowlands (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney): Will the Minister give way?

Dr. Kim Howells: Will the Minister give way?

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. If the Minister does not give way, Members know very well that they must then contain themselves, however difficult that may be.

Sir Wyn Roberts: I have only four minutes in which to cover all the points, and I want to discuss not only school buildings but special education needs, speech therapy and all the other subjects that the hon. Member for Rhondda raised.

I want to say a word about the work carried out from revenue accounts. In 1991-92, education authorities budgeted to spend almost 30 per cent. more than they did in 1979-80. Taken together with the decline in the school population, that means that for each pupil in Wales the average expenditure has risen by some 36 per cent. to £1,321 per primary pupil and by more than 40 per cent. to £1,884 per secondary pupil. At primary level, Mid Glamorgan is spending slightly less than the average, at £1,288 per pupil, but spending at secondary level is slightly above average, at £1,908 per pupil.

A difficulty which must be recognised is the continuing high level of surplus places in the system. There are some 118,000 such places in Wales altogether, which are estimated to drain local education authorities' resources by more that £20 million per year. That money could be better spent delivering better services in better schools.

Mr. Rogers: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. This Adjournment debate is specifically about education facilities in Mid Glamorgan, but all the Minister's answers have been about Wales in general. I know that you are not responsible for what he says, but surely he should deal with the subject of the debate.

Madam Deputy Speaker: That is not a point of order for the Chair. The Minister is well within the subject matter.

Sir Wyn Roberts: I know that Opposition Members do not want to hear the facts, but I was about to say that Mid Glamorgan continues to carry more than 13,000 surplus primary places and nearly 7,500 surplus secondary places. The hon. Gentleman will agree that that is a waste of resources.

The system of unhypothecated credit approvals for education building was instituted at the request of the local authorities themselves. If they then choose to spend their resources on services other than education, it is to those authorities that parents and right hon. Members should look to ensure that children receive the best possible education in the best possible surroundings. The alternative is that we in central Government should dictate to the LEAs what their education capital spending must be. I do not think that the local authorities would take kindly to that proposal, but I can tell the hon. Gentleman that it is never far from my mind when I hear about "crumbling schools"——

The motion having been made after Ten o'clock, and the debate having continued for half an hour, MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned accordingly at twelve minutes to Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 13 May 1992

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

MERSEY DOCKS AND HARBOUR BILL *[Lords]*

Order for Third Reading read.
To be read the Third time tomorrow.

ALLIANCE AND LEICESTER (GIROBANK) BILL

BRITISH RAILWAYS (No. 4) BILL

EAST COAST MAIN LINE (SAFETY) BILL

LONDON UNDERGROUND (GREEN PARK) BILL

LONDON UNDERGROUND (JUBILEE) BILL

Orders for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time tomorrow.

PITTENWEEM HARBOUR ORDER CONFIRMATION BILL

Mr. Secretary Lang presented a Bill to confirm a Provisional Order under section 7 of the Private Legislation Procedure (Scotland) Act 1936, relating to Pittenweem Harbour: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be considered on Tuesday 19 May and to be printed. [Bill 7.]

Oral Answers to Questions

ENVIRONMENT

Sewage Treatment

1. **Mr. Cran:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what percentage of sewage treatment works met their consents standards in 1979; and what percentage comply at the latest date for which figures are available.

The Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Michael Howard): No records were kept centrally on sewage treatment works in 1979. The latest available figures show that, in 1990, 88 per cent. of sewage treatment works met the long-term performance measures specified in their discharge consents. That compares with 77 per cent. in 1986. I expect almost all sewage treatment works to be in a position to meet the required standards from the end of this year.

Mr. Cran: Will my right hon. and learned Friend bring pressure to bear on the chairman of Yorkshire Water, which is pumping raw sewage into the River Humber from the south end of my constituency? Yorkshire Water has not made the necessary investment in treatment works in that part of my constituency. Is that not a disgrace? Will my right hon. and learned Friend help me?

Mr. Howard: I understand the concern that lies behind my hon. Friend's question, but the discharge to which he referred does not significantly affect the quality of the water in the Humber estuary. Nevertheless, we are committed to ending such discharges. Yorkshire Water will be drawing up a programme to provide appropriate treatment for the discharges.

Mr. Sheerman: Is the Secretary of State aware of the massive sewage pollution in the River Calder, which has been added to by an enormous old tip that has slipped into the river, blocking it at one point? Very dangerous heavy metal contamination has been found in that slip. Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give special consideration to Kirklees and the people who are trying to fight the real danger of a great deal of pollution in our water supplies?

Mr. Howard: I shall ensure that the relevant water authority is made aware of the circumstances described by the hon. Gentleman. He will know that £28 billion is being invested in improving our water standards through programmes that are being implemented throughout the country, of which about 50 per cent. is devoted to the treatment of sewage.

Mr. Bellingham: Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that, unlike the chairman of Yorkshire Water, the chairman of Anglian Water has done an excellent job? Anglian Water recently opened a new sewage plant—indeed, the Under-Secretary of State, my hon. Friend the Member for Banbury (Mr. Baldry), had the pleasure of opening it last year—which cost almost £10 million. Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that, without privatisation and access to private capital, that investment would not have been made?

Mr. Howard: I think that both the chairman of Yorkshire Water and the chairman of Anglian Water are doing a pretty good job. My hon. Friend is right in what he says about the current investment in improving our water environment. It did not happen when the industry was in the public sector, under Governments of both political parties. The record of investment in the water industry when the Labour party was last in power does not bear the skimpiest examination.

Mr. Skinner: Is not it significant that since the water authorities have been privatised, a number of Tory Members of Parliament—there will be more in future—are complaining about the state of the water? When will the Secretary of State clean up the River Doe Lea, where pollution is 1,000 times above the necessary safety levels? When will he clean up the dioxin at Bolsover? Why does he not respond to Bolsover district council's call for a public inquiry? Is not the truth of the matter that he knows all about sewage, which stinks along the Government Benches? That is why the Government are bailing out Olympia and York at Canary wharf.

Mr. Howard: The one thing of which I would never have accused the hon. Gentleman, although I might have accused many other Members of this particular failing, is a short memory. There was much more reason for concern about the state of our water environment when the industry was in the public sector than there is now. I urge the hon. Gentleman to see the massive improvements that have been made to our water environment as a result of the huge investment that has become possible following the privatisation of the industry.

Local Government Finance

2. **Mr. Carrington:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has any proposals for restoring the fixing of non-domestic rate poundages to local authority control.

The Minister for Local Government and Inner Cities (Mr. John Redwood): No, Madam.

Mr. Carrington: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that answer, as are the many small businesses in Fulham that were terrified at the prospect of having their rates set by a spendthrift local council. Does my hon. Friend remember that when the Labour party took control of the London borough of Hammersmith and Fulham, almost its first action was to raise the borough precept by 100 per cent. and the rate poundage by 44 per cent? Does my hon. Friend agree that local businesses need to be protected from such irresponsibility?

Mr. Redwood: I agree, and that is just one example of profligate Labour authorities that overtax and overspend. Business needed to be protected. We want business to prosper across the country. That means keeping rates bills down. That is why I hope that the Opposition will support the legislation that we shall be introducing shortly to cut bills further.

Ozone Layer

3. **Dr. Strang:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the steps which are being taken to protect the ozone layer; and if he will make a statement.

The Minister for the Environment and Countryside (Mr. David Maclean): We are co-chairing the official negotiations on the ozone layer and hope to achieve agreement on phasing out CFCs and halons four years earlier than the Montreal protocol. I shall keep the House informed of progress.

Dr. Strang: Does the Minister now accept that hydrochlorofluorocarbons pose a greater threat to the ozone layer than was originally thought and that therefore they are no longer acceptable as an additional substitute for the ozone-depleting substances covered by the Montreal protocol? Will the Government now announce a deadline for phasing out HCFCs also?

Mr. Maclean: I accept that HCFCs have some ozone-depleting potential, but they are one twentieth as harmful as CFCs. Of course we want HCFCs to be phased out in the long term, but if we make a unilateral or premature announcement to phase out HCFCs, we shall end up with CFCs being used for longer than they ought to be. Of course we want some of the new super-chemicals that are being developed, but HCFCs have an interim role to play until we reach that ideal state.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: Does my hon. Friend agree that one of the most encouraging breakthroughs recently has been the United States' change of heart regarding the convention on climate change? Will he pass on to our right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State our congratulations on the important role that he played in making sure that the United States changed its view?

Mr. Maclean: I should be delighted to congratulate my right hon. and learned Friend on the role that he played. Most sensible commentators clearly recognise that any attempt to have a Rio agreement without the United States on board would be doomed to failure. The United States contributes 30 per cent. of CO_2 emissions. It was vital to get the United States to go to the convention, so I am delighted that that country will now play a full and key part.

Mr. Beggs: One welcomes the steps that the Government have taken to protect the ozone layer, but can the Minister tell us whether the health of the public at large will be protected as much as it ought to be by that action, given that risk compared with the risk caused by pollution from Sellafield and other radioactive sources?

Mr. Maclean: The hon. Gentleman will know that very strict pollution controls are imposed at Sellafield. It has to operate within very tight constraints on discharges. I am absolutely confident that if one looks at any scale of risk —whether from the ozone layer or from radioactivity— those discharges are very low down in the categories of things that actually harm the public.

Mrs. Gorman: Is my hon. Friend aware that one good volcanic outburst shoots more so-called aerosol gases into the stratosphere than all the industrial production since the beginning of the industrial revolution? Is he aware that

the National Aeronautics and Space Administration recently produced a report casting doubt on the concept of ozone holes? Is he further aware that the former director of the Atomic Energy Commission in the United States, Dixy Lee Ray, has written a book casting doubt on the idea that stopping spraying our armpits with aerosols will save the planet?

Mr. Maclean: In the few years that I have been answering from the Dispatch Box, I have always received useful information from my hon. Friend. I was not aware of the first point, but I have no proposals to control volcanic emissions. I was aware of the second point. I was not aware of the third point, but, again, I intend to continue to use certain deodorants.

Mr. Win Griffiths: The Minister is in no danger of being premature. The latest announcement on CFCs was made only when industry and the President of America took the lead. The evidence about HCFCs is so strong that the Government should now act to ensure that their production is banned as soon as possible. Will not the Minister at least give a commitment that the Government are prepared to talk to industry about doing so?

Mr. Maclean: The whole House would have regarded it as less churlish of the hon. Gentleman if he had paid a fulsome tribute to my predecessor, David Trippier, who took the initiative on CFCs. He decided to call for an earlier phase-out of CFCs. He put it on the European agenda. We are now discussing an earlier phase-out of CFCs and halons because of David Trippier's action. We are very grateful to him for that.

Housing Investment Programme

4. **Mr. Wareing:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to increase the housing investment programme of local authorities seeking to perform their statutory duties in respect of the owners and tenants of defective housing.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Tony Baldry): Local authorities' statutory obligations to the owners of dwellings designated as inherently defective are already taken into account in allocating housing investment programme resources.

Mr. Wareing: Is the Minister really satisfied that that is the true position? A considerable number of my constituents, responding to the policies of the Tory Government, have bought their Boswell and Boot houses. That is costing Liverpool corporation £11 million during the present financial year and will cost £6·5 million next year. Many people cannot have their houses repurchased, despite the defects, because a system has not been found. I am concerned about the tenants of such houses. What provision do the Government make for them in the HIP?

Mr. Baldry: Nationally, I estimate that more than 90 per cent. of all eligible owners will have been assisted by next April. The truth is that Liverpool has been tardy in working out a sensible phased programme of repurchase with owners. For many years it did nothing, but it has finally seen sense. I see no reason why all the eligible owners of designated defective homes in Liverpool should not be assisted by the end of the scheme.

Sir Donald Thompson: Does my hon. Friend understand that many local authorities have a legacy of system-built houses that are not grouped together in one part of an authority area? Will he devise a scheme whereby those houses are looked after together, as under a housing action scheme?

Mr. Baldry: Of course. We recently raised the spending limits of grant-aided repairs in line with the recommendations of the efficiency scrutiny on housing defects legislation, which was published in November 1991, because we wanted to ensure that local authorities dealt with designated defective houses in the most cost-effective way.

Mr. Loyden: The Minister will be aware that many of the houses built in the inter-war years are more than 70 years old and he also knows only too well that local authorities are in no position to take on the task of refurbishing them, as many need major structural repairs. I live in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Mr. Wareing) and I can underline what he is saying about many of the houses on that huge estate. It is beyond the ability of the local authority to deal with it. Is it not time that the Government recognised their responsibility?

Mr. Baldry: We expect local authorities with designated defective properties in their ownership to consider repair needs in the same way as they tackle the renovation of other stock. To ensure the highest quality output, a larger share of the housing investment programme allocation is now awarded to local authorities that are able to prove that they have efficiently and effectively carried out their housing role. I have absolutely no doubt that if Liverpool can demonstrate that it can manage its housing stock efficiently and effectively, it will receive a larger share of the HIP allocation. The truth is that, with regard to the statutory scheme, for a long time Liverpool did nothing. It started to face its statutory responsibilities only when faced with the prospect of court action by its tenants.

Rents-to-mortgages Scheme

5. **Mr. French:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what further plans he has to extend the rents-to-mortgages scheme.

The Minister for Housing and Planning (Sir George Young): We will legislate in the current Session to extend the scheme to council tenants in England and Wales.

Mr. French: I am grateful for confirmation of the fact that we shall develop and expand the rents-to-mortgages scheme. In doing so, will my hon. Friend pay particular attention to the needs of flat-dwellers, who, too often under the right-to-buy scheme, have faced obstacles that have prevented them from proceeding?

Sir George Young: Yes, we will do that. Of course, those who live in flats as opposed to houses will have an additional advantage because they benefit from a higher discount, which will in turn reduce their outgoings and enable them to acquire a greater initial part of the dwelling. As the legislation is developed, we shall see whether additional protection is required for those who live in flats.

Ms. Abbott: Will the rents-to-mortgages scheme apply to the private sector as well as to the public sector? If not, why not?

Sir George Young: I made it clear in my main reply that the legislation would cover council tenants in England and Wales. It has always been the case that we have a mandate for the buildings that have been provided at the taxpayer's expense. The right to buy extends to public tenants, not to private sector tenants. That is an extension of our scheme for local authority tenants. We very much hope that the Labour party will not make the mistake that it made over the right to buy and oppose this scheme; we hope that it will wholeheartedly endorse the scheme.

Mr. Harry Greenway: How soon does my hon. Friend expect the legislation to be in place to enable this admirable scheme to start?

Sir George Young: It was announced in the Gracious Speech for the current Session. The Government will introduce the measure as soon as we can and we hope that it will be implemented in 1993.

Mr. Soley: When will the Government produce a proper housing finance policy which really gives people a choice between renting and buying? All that the Government have done so far is to get rid of 2 million properties in the private and public rented sector and not replace them and, at the same time, impose mortgage misery on 1·5 million people who cannot move into the rented sector but need to do so. Can we please have less fiddling around with such systems and have more radical systems that give people who rent a chance to buy and people who buy and have bought but who need to return to the rented sector a chance to do so? That would mean a genuine choice in housing.

Sir George Young: The hon. Gentleman says that we have got rid of those properties, but they are still there and real families are living in them. They are still part of the country's housing stock.

On the hon. Gentleman's other point, in the past 18 months, interest rates have progressively decreased, thus reducing the pressure on home owners. Had his party been elected, that progress would not have been maintained. On his general point, we are confident that the housing policies that we have been developing and on which we shall work will provide a balanced housing strategy to meet the needs of all the people, whether they want to be tenants or home owners.

Mr. Bowis: Will my hon. Friend use this reform opportunity to build into the new system a tougher requirement for local authorities to collect? If they fail to collect from their tenants, that puts an added financial burden on rent-payment tenants and reduces the money available to improve the housing stock.

Sir George Young: The rent collection performance of some local authorities, especially in London, is deplorable. That means that they have fewer resources to plough back into housing management and maintenance. Under the new system, local authorities that can improve their performances will be rewarded. The Under-Secretary of State, my hon. Friend the Member for Banbury (Mr. Baldry), and I will meet some of the local authorities whose performance has been disappointing, to see how we can encourage them to do better.

Sports Clubs

6. **Mr. Pendry:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to introduce mandatory rate relief for voluntary non-profit-making sports clubs.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Robin Squire): No, Madam.

Mr. Pendry: Is the Minister aware that that was a most complacent reply? Is he further aware that, according to his Department's figures, more than 1,000 voluntary sports clubs were denied rate relief in England and Wales last year? Government rating policy is hitting the grassroots of sport, whereas in Northern Ireland mandatory rate relief is benefiting sport. Will the new Minister use his undoubted talents to urge the Government to extend the Northern Ireland system to the rest of the United Kingdom?

Mr. Squire: To the extent that I detected a compliment in that question, I thank the hon. Gentleman, but in reply to the substance of that question, I must say no. The Government believe—and I agree *[Laughter.]*—that local authorities are best placed to determine the contribution that clubs make to the local community. Local authorities can already give up to 100 per cent. relief. That is determined locally; it is not a matter in which the Government should intervene.

Mr. Devlin: Do not many sports clubs play on grounds belonging to charitable trusts, which are automatically eligible for the full 50 per cent. rate relief?

Mr. Squire: I believe that my hon. Friend is correct. To return to the point of the original question, we recently conducted a survey which showed that a growing number of non-profit-making clubs were receiving more relief. Indeed, such clubs received more relief in 1990-91 than in 1989-90. We believe that our policy is working.

Council House Sales

7. **Mr. Vaz:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to allow councils to spend the revenue they get from the sale of council houses.

Mr. Baldry: Local authorities may currently spend 25 per cent. of their capital receipts from the sale of council houses. We have no plans to change that percentage.

Mr. Vaz: The Minister will know that since 1979 Leicester city council has sold more than 9,500 council houses under the right-to-buy scheme, bringing in £99 million in capital receipts. He will also know that when the Minister for Housing and Planning visited Leicester he told the city council to carry on with the good work. Is not it absurd that that money remains in the bank, and the council cannot spend it on building new homes and repairing defective housing? When will the Government be prepared to change their plans?

Mr. Baldry: Leicester may well have sold a lot of houses and have made some money from that, but it also has considerable debts—£286 million worth. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will not be insensible to the cost to the community charge payers of Leicester of servicing that debt. Once the council has cleared its debts, it will be able to spend most of its receipts as it wishes.

Mr. Hicks: Does my hon. Friend agree that in certain parts of the country there is a genuine need for specialised housing, such as low-cost social housing for disabled people and the single homeless? Is there not a strong case for relaxing the present figure of 25 per cent.—say, to 40 per cent? To do so would not only help to meet a social need but help the housing and construction industry.

Mr. Baldry: I understand my hon. Friend's worries, but to let councils spend more of their capital receipts would not solve the problems that he mentions, because capital receipts tend to be scarcest in the areas of greatest need. Of course we have to tackle the problems of social housing, especially in the important area of housing for special needs. That is why the Housing Corporation continues to receive a large share of public finance which, together with the money that it raises from the private sector, means that its future budget will be almost £2 billion.

Mr. Bennett: What hope can the Minister offer many of my constituents who are homeless and on the council waiting list in Tameside and in Stockport? Does he realise that in Stockport, the number of people on the housing waiting list is now double the number it was in 1974 when I was first elected to the House? Stockport has a considerable sum which it could spend to provide homes for all the people who desperately need them. Is not it time that the Government allowed local authorities to spend their capital receipts, and to solve the problem of homelessness and of those who desperately need better accommodation?

Mr. Baldry: Stockport also has a very large amount of local authority debt. It must be right that, as far as possible, the debt is discharged. It is the past profligacy of many Labour local authorities which has led to local government's enormous debts. Between them, the top five indebted councils in England have a debt of about £5·5 billion.

Mr. Batiste: Can my hon. Friend confirm that over the coming year the Government intend to keep the tightest control over local authority borrowing and spending, and especially that they will not allow Labour authorities to use the introduction of the council tax as an excuse to rip off their taxpayers?

Mr. Baldry: That is absolutely correct. The history of local government finance all too often demonstrates that Labour-controlled authorities have been profligate in handling public expenses. As so often now, their community charge payers have to finance high interest rates and high service charges in repaying the debts incurred by Labour-controlled local authorities.

Mr. Gould: What is the Minister's best estimate of the current level of capital receipts? How many houses could be built and how many homeless families rehoused if that money were invested in housing? What saving could be made to the public purse if local authorities were permitted to rehouse homeless families instead of putting them into bed-and-breakfast accommodation? Does the Minister accept that the answers to those questions are of direct, practical and immediate importance to homeless families and to the construction industry? If he cannot give detailed answers now, why not?

Mr. Baldry: I suspect that we should all like to hear the shadow Chancellor answer those questions. The Opposition are in a complete mess on this issue. During the election campaign, the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) sought to persuade us that the public sector borrowing requirement rules should be relaxed. That was immediately attacked as monstrous by the shadow Chancellor. It is interesting that the shadow Chancellor could not bring himself to sign Labour's amendment to release councils' capital receipts which was on the Order Paper yesterday, although he is confident in signing the amendment today. The truth is that the shadow Chancellor shows a greater responsibility for public finances than does the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould).

East Thames Corridor

9. **Mr. Hunter:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a further statement on his policy regarding development in the east Thames corridor.

Sir George Young: The study into the potential of the east Thames corridor for development and environmental enhancement, commissioned by my right hon. Friend the Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) last November, is proceeding and is due to be completed by July. Once the study is completed, I shall need to look carefully at the consultants' findings and consider appropriate action.

Mr. Hunter: As the concept of development in the east Thames corridor has much merit in itself and as it would relieve pressure for development in other parts of the south of England where, arguably, there has been excessive development in the past, will my hon. Friend give a great priority in this Parliament to implementing sensitive development in the east Thames corridor?

Sir George Young: My hon. Friend is right. The east Thames corridor has considerable potential for development, not only for those who live in the area, but for the region as a whole. We see it as a regional resource. One of our priorities will be to develop a coherent strategy for the east Thames corridor, enhancing the environment while releasing opportunities for development and focusing especially on the many derelict and underused sites. If we can do that, it will reduce the pressure on other parts of the region.

Mr. Spearing: Can the Minister confirm that the criteria for the study are other than the criteria delivered some time ago to the London Docklands development corporation? Does not full development also include affordable housing, opportunities for employment, productive industry and integrated public transport, all of which were notably lacking from the notorious Canary wharf scheme? Surely we want something which is other than an enlarged London Docklands development corporation.

Sir George Young: The hon. Gentleman is confusing two entirely different studies. The east Thames corridor study is examining a strategic outline for a whole region. The LDDC, in the study to which the hon. Gentleman refers, was focused much more narrowly on part of east Thames. The scale is different. There will be opportunities in the east Thames corridor for affordable housing, regeneration, employment opportunities and, of course, transport, because the channel tunnel rail link will go

through the middle. We are determined to obtain the best possible benefit from that transport link both for those living in the area and for those in the region as a whole.

Mr. Jacques Arnold: My hon. Friend will be aware that those of us who represent historic towns and green belt areas in the east Thames corridor are aware of not only the opportunities but the considerable dangers presented by the study. May I draw it to his attention that the borough of Gravesham contains the only remaining piece of green belt southwards from the Thames between the London conurbation and the Medway towns? It has associations with Charles Dickens at Gad's Hill and local residents are determined to maintain it.

Sir George Young: I make it absolutely clear that the terms of reference for the consultants studying the east Thames corridor include the opportunity to enhance the environment in that area for the benefit of local residents. Any concept that the region will be concreted over for development is wholly misguided. We want to improve the environmental quality of the region at the same time as looking at some of the underused sites, especially those which suffer from degradation.

Mr. Gould: Does the Minister accept that taxpayers' money should not be used to bale out a private sector company such as Olympia and York, particularly when the fortunes of that company and of the Government and their Ministers have been so closely linked? Will he assure the House that any deal struck with Olympia and York will be totally transparent and that full disclosure will be made of all the tax benefits, rating reliefs and other sweeteners already made available to that company at the taxpayers' expense?

Sir George Young: Any expenditure by the Government will be subject to the normal scrutiny by the House and the Public Accounts Committee and to all the other institutional opportunities available to Opposition Members. I endorse what my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State said yesterday. Any transaction between the Government and a landlord in the east Thames on behalf of civil servants will be done on the basis of the best value for money.

Empty Council Properties

10. **Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the 10 councils with the highest number of council properties lying empty.

Mr. Baldry: In the latest housing investment programme returns, the 10 councils reporting the highest percentage of their council house stock empty on 1 April 1991 were Liverpool, Manchester, Salford, Burnley, Brent, Hackney, Tower Hamlets, Knowsley, Newcastle upon Tyne and Wolverhampton.

Mr. Riddick: Is it not the case that most of those authorities are Labour controlled? Is it not also the case that most Labour authorities also have considerable rent arrears? If those Labour local authorities got their act together could we not achieve a massive reduction in the levels of homelessness in Britain?

Mr. Baldry: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. All those authorities were Labour when the figures were prepared. *[Interruption.]* The facts speak for themselves. Many Labour councils have a disgraceful record in filling up their homes and collecting rents. The Audit Commission has advised that there is no reason why local authorities should not on average turn round empty properties within six weeks in London and three weeks elsewhere. If those targets were achieved it would release an extra 26,000 lettings in a year.

Mr. Pike: Does the Minister recognise that the largest percentage of those unused properties in Burnley are deck access properties with special problems? Does he recognise that those problems are included in the Burnley city challenge bid? Will he undertake, if he wants that problem solved, to ensure that Burnley's bid for city challenge is approved, or to ensure that a special allocation is given to Burnley to deal with those properties?

Mr. Baldry: Good try.

Mr. Colvin: Does my hon. Friend acknowledge that it is not merely councils which have empty properties, and that the waiting lists in England would be halved if the 650,000 empty private properties came on to the market? Can he say what further steps the Government will take, in addition to those that they have already taken, to stimulate the private rented sector?

Mr. Baldry: My hon. Friend makes a good point and that is why the Minister for Housing and Planning and I are talking to the Housing Corporation, with a view to having a housing association in every region, able to act as managing agents for any owner in the private sector who would like their property to be taken over and rented out. Clearly, it would be all to the good if one could take into account more of that unoccupied property. That is why we are taking those steps with the Housing Corporation to find out how much more private property we can bring into active use.

Mr. Bradley: Yet again, the Minister makes an unwarranted attack on Manchester. The latest figures for Manchester show that half the empty properties have been emptied because it won the city challenge and the Government asked it to empty them. Only 1,800 out of 90,000 properties are management voids, which is less than 2 per cent.—a lower percentage than the Government's own Ministry of Defence stock.

Mr. Baldry: I suggest that the hon. Gentleman looks at the figures. According to Manchester's own figures, the city had 6,000 properties empty on 1 April. What is more, Manchester had 3,785 properties vacant for more than six months—more than 4 per cent. of its housing stock was vacant for more than six months—but the hon. Gentleman has the audacity to come to the House with special pleading without explaining why that number of properties should remain vacant for such a long time.

Mr. James Hill: Is my hon. Friend aware that in a small city such as Southampton during the election campaign I mentioned on many occasions that there were 379 empty council units in the city, when the cry from the other side was that the council could not use the capital receipts? I had to deny that, but no one seemed to register the fact in the Labour council. Now, people are aware of homelessness in the city. Those 379 units could wipe out homelessness overnight.

Mr. Baldry: My hon. Friend makes a good point. There is no reason, as the Audit Commission has advised, why local authorities such as Southampton should not be able to turn round their void properties within three weeks, if they were effectively managed and efficiently run.

Mr. George Howarth: When will the Minister own up to the fact that the worst offenders as landlord of empty properties are the Government, especially with their Ministry of Defence properties? Will he accept that in almost every case that he mentioned, including Knowsley, there are good reasons why those properties are empty, the chief reason being that the Government have cut the amount of expenditure on housing since 1979 by 70 per cent? When will the Minister get out and find out what those problems are all about? When will he do something about them and, instead of indulging in prolonged, unnecessary and counter-productive attacks on local authorities, do something constructive and engage in a partnership with them to provide the resources to bring the properties back into a lettable condition?

Mr. Baldry: The Government already contribute more than £3·5 billion a year in housing revenue account subsidy to the cost of council housing. I find it staggering that, instead of expressing concern about the number of empty properties in their areas and trying to take the lead in ensuring that local authorities turn round their voids more quickly, the hon. Member for Knowsley, North (Mr. Howarth) and his hon. Friends come up with an amazing amount of special pleading every time the subject arises. There is no reason why authorities should not be able to turn round their voids within three weeks outside London, and within six weeks in London.

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Pollution

11. **Mr. McFall:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution will retain its present responsibilities of environmental inspection.

Mr. Maclean: We intend that Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution should become part of the proposed new environment agency. Meanwhile, Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution will continue its excellent work of protecting our environment.

Mr. McFall: In the light of the report by the Environment Select Committee—and, indeed, the forthcoming Rio summit—it is dismaying to note that the Government have ratted on their promise to propose, in the Queen's Speech, a unified agency to deal with atmospheric and aqueous pollution. That appears even more squalid when we find that it is the result of an interdepartmental fight: the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food is currently taking some of the powers of the National Rivers Authority.

Does the Minister agree that he can learn something from the position in Scotland, where a unified pollution agency has been set up? An away-day ticket to Glasgow or Edinburgh would help him to realise that such an agency is worth going for.

Mr. Maclean: I find that rather pathetic. I thought that by now the Labour party would have learnt not to believe press tittle-tattle—unless, of course, it is seeking to divert attention from the genuine rows on its Front Bench. The Government have not proposed changes in DOE-MAFF responsibilities, and we shall shortly announce the structure of the new environment agency.

Mr. Adley: As part of his duties, will my hon. Friend please study the report of the Committee stage of the Environmental Protection Act 1989? Will he note particularly the plight of my constituents Mr. and Mrs. Spencer and their neighbours, who live in Fairfield, Christchurch and who for years have had to suffer the indignity of living under a Ready Mixed Concrete plant, which showers their properties with dust?

Is my hon. Friend aware that his predecessor, Mr. Trippier—to whom he rightly paid tribute—sought to allay my fears, saying that the Environmental Protection Act would deal with the problem? It has not done so. When my hon. Friend has read the report of the Committee stage, will he agree to visit my constituency, and attend a meeting with the local authority, Fairfield residents and me, so that we can see what can be done to alleviate the residents' plight?

Mr. Maclean: I shall certainly read the report of the Committee stage, and I shall certainly call for the file on the problem identified by my hon. Friend. I should have thought that our system of integrated pollution control —we are working through all the major polluters in the country, including limestone, cement and mineral works —would soon bring the problem within the scope of integrated pollution control requirements, and do a good deal to minimise it. I will study the file, however, and I look forward to a discussion with my hon. Friend.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Will the Minister give an undertaking that, until the arrival of the much-delayed day on which the Government legislate for an environmental protection agency, increased resources will be provided for Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution as an interim measure? Last October, in the Department's own ministerial information system—MINIS—report, Mr. John Hobson, the head of pollution control, said that unless substantially increased resources were provided within the next three years, it was inevitable that something fundamental would give.

Mr. Maclean: I do not think that the hon. Gentleman should exaggerate. We have made it clear that the creation of the environment agency remains a high priority, and drafting of the Bill will proceed so that we can take advantage of the earliest possible legislative opportunity.

As for resources for HMIP, I am delighted to tell the House that the number of staff in post has doubled over the past few years. We shall continue to ensure that the inspectorate has all the staff and resources that it needs to carry on its excellent work in protecting our environment.

Mr. Nigel Evans: Is my hon. Friend aware of the concern felt by residents in my constituency, Ribble Valley, about the possibility of the burning of orimulsion and the consequent increased discharges of sulphur over the villages of Read and Simonstone? That concern is shared by me, and by the local authority, and the matter is currently being considered by HMIP.

Mr. Maclean: Yes, I am aware of those concerns. I know that HMIP is considering them at the moment. I assure my hon. Friend that all due care and consideration will be given, and, if permission is granted, there will be

suitable discharge consents and detailed restrictions so that, in all circumstances, people living nearby are protected.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: Can the Minister say why the commitment to an environmental protection agency was absent from the Queen's Speech? After all, it was the Prime Minister who pledged that there would be early legislation to that effect. If the reason for its absence is not that the Secretary of State cannot withstand the pressure from the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, is it because the Secretary of State himself does not have a sufficient commitment to an environmental protection agency? Either way, does not that prove that environmental protection will continue to be given a low priority by this Government, who are totally complacent and do not understand the urgency and the severity of the threat to our environment?

Mr. Maclean: I think that the hon. Lady will, perhaps, have cause to regret those words. As I have said, the creation of the new environmental protection agency remains a high priority and we are pushing on with the drafting of a Bill so that we can take advantage of the earliest legislative opportunity.

One reason the Labour party was not believed and not elected was that every single one of its manifesto commitments was a top priority to be implemented apparently within two days of the election. The public have seen through that sham and they believe us. There will be an environmental protection agency, it will work and we shall get the credit for it.

Local Government

13. **Mr. Oppenheim:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to speed up progress towards unitary local authorities; and if he will make a statement.

17. **Mrs. Currie:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will make a statement on the progress of the local government commission.

Mr. Howard: We shall set up the local government commission this summer to begin its task of reviewing local government structure in the shire counties, area by area. In each area it reviews, the commission will consider whether a unitary structure would better reflect the identities and interests of local communities and secure effective and convenient local government.

Mr. Oppenheim: May I thank my right hon. and learned Friend for that reply? Is he aware that many people consider that having two major overlapping tiers of local government can lead to waste and duplication? Will he, therefore, send the commission to Derbyshire as soon as possible where it will find a surprising degree of agreement across all parties, with the single exception of the ruling Labour group on the county council, that Derbyshire should move to being a unitary local authority, based on the existing borough, district and city council boundaries as soon as possible?

Mr. Howard: I am certainly aware that the view expressed by my hon. Friend is very widely shared. I expect, as a result of the commission's activities, that there will be a substantial increase in the number of unitary authorities in this country. I hope to make an announcement about the programme of areas for review before the summer recess.

Mrs. Currie: Is the Secretary of State aware that his lovely, cuddly new Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State wrote to me yesterday stating that areas where there is a history of dissatisfaction with the existing structure will need to be high on the list of areas for review. Does the Secretary of State accept that the word "dissatisfaction" is the understatement of the year with regard to Derbyshire county council? Can I put some fire into his belly and ask him to put a match to our county council so that we have decent local authorities in Derbyshire in future?

Mr. Howard: I am pleased to tell my hon. Friend that the phrase that she used is yet another aspect of Government policy with which the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State agrees. We shall certainly look very hard at the programme which I shall be announcing before long. I have no doubt that when the commission comes to consider Derbyshire, my hon. Friend will, in her quite inimitable way, put her views about the future of local government in the county to the commission.

Mr. Ashton: Will the Minister have the integrity to do what is best for local government or will he take notice of the two idiots from Derbyshire who want to carve things up again in a political way? Can we at least have a proper appeals body to consider disputes? Will the Secretary of State insist that there will be proper minimum size for the unitary authorities? Will he have that type of influence, or will we have the same old type of gerrymandering carve-up that we saw in the past?

Mr. Howard: We have never had gerrymandering carve-ups in the past. The independent commission will set about its task with complete integrity and it will make recommendations to me. I shall then decide on the recommendations that it makes and place them before the House for approval.

Mr. Barnes: The hon. Members for Amber Valley (Mr. Oppenheim) and for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) have an unhealthy and unwarranted obsession about Derbyshire county council. The only way to get rid of that obsession is for them to try to get rid of the county council. The hon. Member for Amber Valley produced a Bill in the last Parliament to do exactly that. Can we ensure that Derbyshire county council and the districts in Derbyshire are fully consulted about their fate and about what the unitary authority areas will be?

Mr. Howard: It is much more than consultation. The authorities in Derbyshire will be able to put their views directly to the local government commission as will the hon. Gentleman and hon. Members. I note that the views expressed by my hon. Friends about that and a range of other matters seem to have found a good deal of approval from their constituents at the recent general election.

Mr. Channon: When the commission has finished with Derbyshire, can my right hon. and learned Friend ensure that it then moves speedily on to Essex because there is great unanimity of view in my constituency and, I suspect, in a number of ex-county boroughs all over the country, that the best form of local government that we have had

for many years was the county borough system? The sooner we return to a similar system, the better for all concerned.

Mr. Howard: I shall do my best to accommodate my right hon. Friend's views, but he will understand that the commission will be unable to look at every area at once. I shall consider carefully the views expressed by my right hon. and hon. Friends when I draw up the programme of work for the commission, which I hope to announce soon.

Mr. William O'Brien: Does the Secretary of State agree with the Association of District Councils that the programme set by the commission to report over five years is much too long? In view of the concerns expressed by his colleagues, does he agree that the number of people serving on the commission, which is now set at between five and 15, is totally inadequate? Will he agree to increase the number so that the commission can report over a two-year rather than a five-year period? That is in the best interests of local government, the people receiving the service, and the people who work in it. Can we have the process speeded up by increasing the number of people serving on the commission?

Mr. Howard: No, I do not think that the task should be rushed. It is impractical to suggest that the whole of the country could be considered in two years. Naturally, I want the commission to proceed speedily, but it must do a proper and thorough job and that will take a certain amount of time.

Mr. Barry Field: May I treat my right hon. and learned Friend to a rendition of an Isle of Wight song: 43 county councillors, 64 borough councillors, 29 parish and town councillors and more mayors than Toytown. And a local government boundary commission recommendation that we should have a unitary authority. Can we please be near the top of the list?

Mr. Howard: I note what my hon. Friend says. He has made his views clear to me on a number of occasions, including when I visited his constituency during the general election campaign. I shall take his concerns fully into account in preparing the programme for the commission.

Urban Regeneration Agency

14. **Mr. Wicks:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how the proposed urban regeneration agency will be accountable to Parliament.

16. **Mr. Gunnell:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how the proposed urban regeneration agency will be accountable to Parliament.

Mr. Howard: The urban regeneration agency will be a sponsored body working under my guidance and reporting direct to me. I shall be accountable to Parliament for its actions.

Mr. Wicks: Is not that new quango simply a further attempt to marginalise local authorities? Is not the lesson from the history of 25 years of initiatives and schemes to tackle inner city problems that we need local authorities and local communities to represent their views rather than top-down approaches from London? Surely it is time for the Government to set aside their excitable attacks on local government and to show wisdom on one of the biggest issues facing the nation in the 1990s?

Mr. Howard: From what we have seen, in recent years local authorities have been increasingly queuing up for action from London, which is the opposite of the position described by the hon. Member for Croydon, North-West (Mr. Wicks). The hon. Gentleman has totally failed to understand the history of the past few years. Government initiatives have contributed substantially to an improvement of the position in inner cities, and the urban regeneration agency will be able to focus the funds and powers available more effectively and do much to bring hope to the people who live in inner cities.

Mr. Gunnell: Will the Secretary of State assure us that when land is acquired by the agency from local authorities, those authorities will be credited with the capital receipt?

Mr. Howard: Proper arrangements will have to be made for the provision of compensation when land is taken by the agency. The hon. Gentleman will see the detailed provisions that I shall make when the Bill is published.

Points of Order

3.31 pm

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I believe that, before long, the House is likely to debate the most important issue to come before it during this Session of Parliament—indeed, this Parliament itself—the Maastricht treaty. I am sure that you, Madam Speaker, will agree that it is absolutely essential that the House should have sufficient information in front of it before it debates that treaty. At present in the Vote Office there are copies of the treaty on European union, known as the Maastricht treaty, but no copies of the treaty of Rome.

Page 47 of the Maastricht treaty states:

"Article 175 shall be replaced by the following:"

There then follows a new article 175. Unless one has both the treaty of Rome and the Maastricht treaty before one, it is impossible to assess what changes are taking place or to know what the House is being asked to vote on. May I ask you, Madam Speaker, to use your good offices to ensure that anyone who asks for the Maastricht treaty is also given a copy of the treaty of Rome, as one without the other is meaningless?

The legislation is about adding titles two, three and four of the treaty of European union, together with other provisions of the treaty as far as they relate to those titles. Would it be possible for the House to know in advance what other parts of the treaties relate to those titles and are therefore to become legislation in this country? I am thinking particularly of article B on page 7 which mentions the "acquis communautaire"—I hope that I have pronounced that correctly. I do not know whether that is Norman French, but if it is not and if, through the treaty, it is to become the law of this country, should it not be in the English language? Madam Speaker, you are better educated than me and may know what "acquis communautaire" means. I do not, but I believe that the House should know before considering the matter further.

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. First, I imagine that the Government have some form of document offering guidance on understanding the treaties. May I ask that you, Madam Speaker, suggest to the Government that they put those documents of guidance in the Vote Office? Secondly, it is almost certain that the Attorney-General will have issued some guidance on the legal consequences of those documents. Could that advice also be lodged at the Vote Office? My hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) is absolutely right in saying that, at present, the House is in the dark. Surely it cannot be in the interests of anybody for such a vital subject to be debated in such circumstances.

Mr. Christopher Gill (Ludlow): Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Order. I think that I can now deal with the point of order. The hon. Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen) has been extremely helpful, and has taken the words out of my mouth. It is the Government's responsibility to ensure that documents are available. I am sure that, in this case, they should be made available in a simple and helpful form for all hon. Members so that they do not have to wade through the enormous number of documents that we have to consider.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. May I refer to the East Coast Main Line (Safety) Bill which was mentioned when private business was dealt with? One of your duties, Madam Speaker, is to appoint examiners to look at private Bills. One of the requirements for anyone wishing to introduce such a Bill is to convince you, the examiners, and the House that the Bill's purpose cannot be achieved in any other way. In the last Session we passed the Transport and Works Act 1992 which could be used to achieve exactly the same ends as the East Coast Main Line (Safety) Bill. Therefore, the examiners should find that the Bill is unnecessary and should report to the House at the earliest opportunity so that petitioners such as the Ramblers Association, which objects to the Bill, would not have to incur further expense in opposing it.

Madam Speaker: The Bill has already passed the examiners and is in a satisfactory form.

Mr. Gill: Further to the point of order raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow)——

Madam Speaker: Order. I have dealt thoroughly with that point of order. We had two further points of order to which I responded. There can be no further point of order on the matter.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. It is said that information for hon. Members is available from the Vote Office. But it is available as non-parliamentary papers published by the European Community. We have been misled because no material has been published by the Government.

Madam Speaker: If I heard the hon. Gentleman correctly, he is being helpful by saying that information is available to Members from the Vote Office, as long as they point their noses in the right direction.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker. I think that I heard you say that it would be wise to have all the documents available. You are absolutely right. In order to ensure that we have a comprehensive set, we should have a copy of the Single European Act and a list of all Tory Members who voted for the guillotine to force that Act through.

Madam Speaker: That is an interesting point, but it is not a point of order for the Chair.

Orders of the Day

Debate on the Address

[Sixth Day]

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question [6 May],

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, as follows:

Most Gracious Sovereign,

We, Your Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled, beg leave to offer our humble thanks to Your Majesty for the Gracious Speech which Your Majesty has addressed to both Houses of Parliament.—*[Mr. Kenneth Baker.]*

Question again proposed.

The Economy

Madam Speaker: We are heavily subscribed for the debate. Speeches between 7 pm and 9 pm will be limited to 10 minutes, and I ask for voluntary restraint by hon. Members who speak outside that period. I have selected for debate the amendment in the name of the Leader of the Opposition. I have selected for Division only the amendment in the name of the Leader of the Liberal Democrat party.

3.37 pm

Mr. John Smith (Monklands, East): I beg to move, at the end of the Question, to add:

but humbly regret that the Gracious Speech does not recognise the existence of rising unemployment, which menaces the security and wellbeing of so many citizens and families in all parts of the nation, and the dangers for the United Kingdom's future economic development caused by the continuing fall in investment in the productive economy and the continuing neglect of education and training; and call upon Your Majesty's Government to adopt economic policies which promote sustained industrial and commercial investment, improve and expand education and training, encourage science and technology, stimulate economic advance in all the regions and nations of the United Kingdom, and create the opportunity for a successful response to the new challenge of the Single Market.

I add my congratulations to those of my colleagues and express great pleasure at seeing you in the Chair, Madam Speaker.

Consideration of proposals in the Queen's Speech and of the justification offered for them by Ministers in the debate so far drives one, I fear, to the sad conclusion that the Government have started on a new period of office cocooned in complacency about the real state of our economy and the many problems in our society. As we listened to the Prime Minister's bland pronouncements at the beginning of the debate on the Gracious Speech, it was hard to believe that the country was still suffering the acute pains of the longest economic recession since the second world war.

Unemployment has risen for 23 consecutive months and is still rising, 21 unemployed people chase every registered vacancy, and in the first three months of this year nearly 15,000 businesses went bust—an increase of 55 per cent. on last year, which was itself a record year for business failures. Despite a deep recession, our overseas trade remains seriously in deficit and is forecast by the Government to get even worse. Overall investment in 1991 fell by 10 per cent. and investment in manufacturing fell by 15 per cent. That means that this is the only country in the European Community in which investment in manufacturing is lower than it was in 1979 when the Conservatives took office.

Mr. John Townend (Bridlington): If the situation is as dire as the right hon. and learned Gentleman has suggested, can he explain why it is that, since the general election, the pound has strengthened, the stock market has risen to new heights and interest rates have gone down?

Mr. Smith: The hon. Gentleman is too easily satisfied. He should be paying attention to when unemployment might start to fall and investment start to rise. All too often, all that Conservative Members are interested in is the level of their shares on the stock exchange. They are not concerned about the jobs that our constituents want.

Where in the Queen's Speech, or in any speech by any Minister in this debate, is there the faintest glimmer of recognition of these economic realities? Where is there any appreciation of the damage caused by the steep fall in investment and the neglect of training when we are only months away from the competition of the single market? Where is there any concern for the waste, frustration and misery of unemployment on the scale from which we suffer?

Unemployment is, in terms of public finances, an extremely expensive option. The cost in terms of lost tax revenue and benefit payments is £8,000 a year for every unemployed person. That, I fear, is seriously to underestimate the economic and human cost of high and rising unemployment. We have consistently condemned the deliberate and cynical manipulation of the measurement of unemployment by a Government determined to conceal the extent of their failures, but, even on the basis of their own underestimation, unemployment is now at 2·65 million, or 9·4 per cent. of the work force. Were unemployment to be measured today on the same basis as it was in 1979 rather than on the manipulated basis, it would, according to the independent Unemployment Unit, be at 3·7 million, or 12·9 per cent. of the work force. *[Interruption.]* It is a bit odd that there should be some complaint from those on the Government Benches when we remind them of the consequences of their manipulation.

What is worse is that the unemployment figures, even when they are honestly measured, understate the impact of the recession on the work force and jobs in Britain. In a study produced this month by Salomon Brothers, who compared unemployment in this recession with that in the recession at the beginning of the 1980s, it was revealed that last year, 1991, the drop in employment—that is, in the number of jobs in the economy—was 996,000. That was the largest fall in employment for 30 years and significantly worse than the fall in employment in 1980-81. This is not adequately reflected in the unemployment figures, as the authors of this report demonstrate, because large numbers of what they call discouraged workers are married women working part time who, when they lose their jobs, cannot claim benefit and are therefore not reflected in the statistics.

In the boom years of the late 1980s, the Conservatives were quick to claim success in creating jobs on the basis of any increase in part-time employment, but we have heard

[Mr. Smith]

not a word as these jobs disappear from sight. According to the latest OECD figures, the United Kingdom has the worst record for job creation among the 24 countries of the OECD. That was not only true for last year but is forecast to be true of this year of 1992.

Mrs. Edwina Currie (Derbyshire, South): The right hon. and learned Gentleman may have got his figures wrong. Is it not a matter of fact that, before the recession started, there were 4·5 million women working part time and, as recently as the early part of this year, there were still 4·5 million women working part time? Is it not also true that countries such as France and Germany have many more people unemployed than we have?

Mr. Smith: The hon. Lady is incorrect. I refer her to the study from which I quoted, which gives the figure of a fall of 996,000 in one year, the largest fall for 30 years.

How astonishing and how revealing it is that the words "recession" and "unemployment" are absent from the Queen's Speech. There is no mention of either the fact of the recession or the fact of unemployment. The Government apparently believe that if they avoid mentioning such unfortunate topics they will not be of concern to us or to those whom we represent here. A certain collective amnesia appears to be the only response that the Government can make to the tragedy and waste of unemployment.

A striking example of the Government's paralysis of action is their failure to permit the phased release of local authority capital receipts to boost the construction industry, as has been urged upon them repeatedly not just by the Labour party, but by the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee, the Institute of Housing, local government of all political persuasions and the whole of the construction industry.

The Institute of Housing has calculated that the impact of the recession in the construction industry cost the Government £1 billion in lost corporation tax, £1·5 billion in the cost of the extra unemployed and £400 million in lost stamp duty—a total of almost £3 billion. A policy of meeting the current need of those who are without homes by utilising the unused resources of a beleaguered industry is not just plain common sense; it is sound public finance. As the Institute of Housing said:

"Mortgage repossessions, homelessness, and lengthening council house waiting lists are symptomatic of unmet demand for affordable housing which the Chancellor could start to tackle with the measures we advocate."

Mr. Ian Taylor (Esher): As the right hon. and learned Gentleman cited the views of the construction industry, will he also cite its views on the loss of disposable income for those who would have been affected by his tax plans if his party had won the election? It would have been a disaster for the construction industry, which is why the right hon. and learned Gentleman and his party were rejected by the public.

Mr. Smith: The hon. Gentleman is remarkably ill informed. The vast majority of people who would have benefited from our tax proposals were first-time buyers. Eight out of 10 families would have benefited from our proposals. Those members of the construction industry who are not paid-up supporters of the Conservative party told us that during the general election campaign.

Unemployment is, perhaps, the worst manifestation of the weakness of the economy, but it is not, unfortunately, our only problem. The average rate of growth from 1979 to the present time was 1·7 per cent. per annum, the worst record of any Government since the war. If we do not do better in the years ahead, we will lose out to more efficient competitors and we will imperil our national standard of living.

At the heart of the difference between the Opposition and the Government is the fact that we recognise that the British economy suffers from serious structural weaknesses that must be overcome. There is insufficient investment, both overall and especially in the crucial manufacturing sector. Our facilities for training and education are woefully inadequate, as every international comparison reveals. It is simply unacceptable to continue to waste our most precious resource, which is the extraordinary potential of ordinary people.

Britain's commitment to technological innovation and scientific discovery is, at the very best, fragile. As the registration of patents reveals, we are losing ground to more successful competitors in a world where ceaseless innovation is the engine of economic success. Our economy seems fixed in an obsession with short-term returns and quick profits, indulging Conservative Members, such as the hon. Member for Esher (Mr. Taylor), with temporary movements in the stock exchange at the expense of the long-term investment that is the only secure route to sustained economic growth, as our successful competitors know only too well.

The structural weakness is dramatically revealed by our continuing balance of trade deficit which, even in the depths of recession, is forecast to reach £6·5 billion this year and to worsen to £9 billion in 1993.

Mr. Graham Riddick (Colne Valley): Could the right hon. and learned Gentleman explain why, having spent many years advocating increased taxation on some income from savings, that proposal was dropped four weeks before the general election?

Mr. Smith: I do not think that the hon. Gentleman's question is relevant, but I shall answer it. Unlike the Conservative party, whose addiction to the poll tax drove it to waste £19 billion of taxpayers' money, we are prepared to listen to representations and criticisms of our policies and we are willing to react. It is a pity that the Conservative party did not realise that it was wrong about the poll tax. Think of all that could have been done with the £19 billion that was wasted on the poll tax.

As for the balance of payments deficit, from which I was diverted by that irrelevant interruption, the fact is that even after the longest recession and a severe depression in domestic demand—one of the most severe depressions that we have experienced—we still draw in imports every week of every month of the year, most of which are products that at one time we manufactured.

When the Prime Minister was Chief Secretary, he sought constantly to explain that deficit as the consequence of increased investment in imported equipment which would generate export growth which would then help to correct the deficit by increased exports. But we observe, do we not, that, although investment has collapsed, the deficit is still with us and getting worse. So much for that bogus theory which the Prime Minister once adopted.

There was once a voice on the Conservative side of the House that was not much convinced by the then Chief Secretary's argument. The right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine), the present President of the Board of Trade, told the Tory Reform group at the party's conference in 1989:

"Britain is not paying its way. We have a serious balance of payments problem . . . I beg our Party not to argue that a deficit on overseas trade is of incidental importance, self-correcting, easily financed. I don't believe a word of it."

How perceptive of the right hon. Gentleman then. I recognise, of course, that his perspective then was a little different. He was heavily engaged on the Tory ladies luncheon circuit and much in demand at constituency chicken dinners throughout the land. The Board of Trade was not, I think, his planned destination as a result of those activities, but during that phase he had some insights which I hope he has not obliterated from his consciousness. His programme was so interventionist that it was mordantly described by the right hon. Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen) as the Henley school of socialism.

What he then perceived, at least in part, and what is true is that the Government of this country cannot abandon their responsibility for our successful economic progress. They have a duty to stimulate and maintain investment; they have a duty to foster manufacturing as our crucial wealth creator; they have a duty to set a longer-term persepective than unfettered markets, left to themselves, can produce; they have a duty to create a positive partnership between Government and industry that maximises our national opportunities in a world of intense competition; they have a duty to create opportunities for education, training and personal development that not only match but surpass those available in other countries. None of these things is even in the mind of the Government, of which the right hon. Member for Henley is now a member. None of them features in the Queen's Speech which we are debating today.

Sir Michael Grylls (Surrey, North-West): The right hon. and learned Gentleman has a reputation, both inside and outside the House, for being a fair man. Does he recognise that any strictures on British industry, particularly on innovation, do not take into account the fact that the top four best selling pharmaceutical drugs in the world have been produced by British firms? That is not a bad record for a small country, and it certainly does not suggest that manufacturing industry is not doing well. It is doing very well.

Mr. Smith: The hon. Gentleman selects one area of our economic activity where we are doing pretty well—the pharmaceutical industry. I wish that that were true to the whole spread of our industrial effort. If I may return the hon. Gentleman's compliment, he is regarded by some as a fair person. I think that he recognises, therefore, that that is not true of other areas of industry and that the pharmaceutical industry stands out as the exception to the general rule. I am criticising not British industry but the Government, who do not support industry's efforts in the competitive markets of the world.

Mr. Simon Burns (Chelmsford): I have been listening to the right hon. and learned Gentleman's speech for a quarter of an hour. Does he realise that he seems to be stuck in some time warp that has not progressed since 9 April? Does not he realise that between January and 9 April he gave the House the same speech, ad nauseam, as he is giving now? The Labour party lost the election and decisively lost last week's local elections. If he does not want to be considered as yesterday's man in the next five years, he will have to come up with new ideas rather than harking back to old criticisms that the British people have rejected.

Mr. Smith: I know that it would be convenient for the Conservative party if, immediately after an election, we stopped all political argument and discussion. That is not why we were sent here. I shall not stop telling the truth about the British economy or change my appreciation of the facts just because of an election result. I wish that investment was not falling and unemployment was not rising and that industry was being supported by Government, but since that is not the position it is our duty to say it clearly and unambiguously.

Mr. Michael Colvin (Romsey and Waterside): Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Mr. Smith: No. I have given way a lot.

The pity is that none of those things is perceived or even understood by the Government. I refer again to the President of the Board of Trade. He now finds himself in charge not of a powerhouse Department to rival the Treasury, as he once dreamed, but of a mini-Ministry whose expenditure in real terms is a third of what it was in 1986-87 and whose budget will be reduced in each of the next three years to a grand total of about £800 million in 1994-95. In case he is tempted to back his interventionist inclinations, or even to utter the dreaded words "industrial strategy", he is policed at his Department by a posse of card-carrying no-turning-back Tories.

I warn the right hon. Gentleman that he has no hope of boosting his budget in the context of the public expenditure cuts, for which the knives are now being sharpened in the Treasury. The reason is the parlous state of our public finances. In his Budget, the Chancellor told us that the PSBR was forecast for this year to be £28 billion, deteriorating to £32 billion next year but then improving steadily until it reached £6 billion in 1996-97. There is now, to put it extremely mildly, widespread scepticism about those figures. Rumours persist that internal Treasury forecasts have revised the figure to above £30 billion for this year alone, and some City analysts are convinced that the figures are even worse. For example, recent calculations by Shearson Lehman Brothers, under the heading "UK Public Spending: No More Mr. Nice Guy", predict that the PSBR will overshoot dramatically for the whole period ahead. It estimates that the deficit this year will be £32 billion, rising to £37 billion next year and declining not to £6 billion but to £21 billion in 1996-97.

Last week, one positive feature of the Prime Minister's speech was this:

"We will sweep away many of the cobwebs of secrecy which needlessly veil too much of Government business."—[*Official Report*, 6 May 1992; Vol. 207, c. 64.]

Today, the Chancellor, in this spirit of cobweb destruction and veil dismantling, should tell the truth about our public finances. Let him wipe away the cobwebs of secrecy and tell us the true state of the PSBR according to the latest forecasts that he has been given by his Treasury civil servants. We know that he has been given them and he should give them to the House. Are his Budget forecasts

[Mr. Smith]

consistent with the latest estimates? As this is right at the heart of what I predict will be an intense debate on public expenditure, the House has a right to know and the Chancellor has a highly convenient opportunity to tell us in this debate.

What we fear is a repeat of the Tories' standard performance—they promise public expenditure increases before an election and deliver cuts after it. In the 1986 autumn statement—just before the 1987 election—there were plans to increase spending but they were abandoned in the years following the election. In fact, in the three years after the 1987 election, expenditure was £21 billion less than was promised in the statements before the election. The same familiar con trick is likely to reappear.

Throughout the recent election we were constantly referred to the public expenditure plans set out in the autumn statement and in the Red Book all the way through to 1996-97. They were the Government's predicted and guaranteed spending plans, but what is their status now, given the increasing doubts about the state of our public finances? Why do we have to wait for the autumn statement to hear the bad news that we know is coming anyway? What our constituents want to know is which of our public services will bear the brunt of the coming Tory cuts. Will it be our health service? Will it be our schools? Will it be our colleges and universities? Will it be community care? Will it be expenditure on law and order and the fight against crime? Will it be training, once again?

In Washington recently the Chancellor predicted a harsh outcome to the public spending round. He has an opportunity today to tell us—the House of Commons—what his intentions are. It is to us here, after all, that he is responsible. What price will our public services have to pay for the election of a Conservative Government? Will the Government now abandon the Tory three-card trick—the pretence that public expenditure programmes can be maintained, taxes cut and the budget balanced all in the next few years? I fear that when that pretence finally has to be abandoned it will be seen that the victim of the process is public investment. That means that further harm will be caused to our economy and to our society.

The Government do not seem even to comprehend that in the modern world sustained public investment in, for example, education and training is a vital precondition of economic success as well as of social progress. In a successful nation in the world of today—and this will be even more true in the world of tomorrow—there is a crucial interconnection between economic strength and social justice. In modern industry, driven as it is by ceaseless innovation and by the new technologies of information, the success of the enterprise depends on utilising the skills and initiative of every employee, and not only those of a small managerial elite. That is why our neglect of skills is such a national tragedy.

We have no future as a low-cost, low-wage, bargain-basement economy. We must instead aim high for a combination of high technology and high skills based on continual investment in innovation and in the skills of our people. How are we to compete against the fast-growing, newly industrialising countries or in the new single European market unless we grasp that fundamental truth and act decisively on it? We shall certainly not succeed by seeking to be the low-wage, low-skill adjunct to the European Community. Instead of competing with those who offer the lowest wages, we should be competing with those who possess the highest skills.

The opt-out from the social chapter of the Maastricht treaty shows all too clearly how far we are adrift from the consensus among our more successful competitors that a strong economy and a fair society go together. We deplore the indifference that the Queen's Speech exhibits towards the manifest weaknesses in our economy and the complacency and inaction that result from that flawed perception of the reality of our situation. Instead of facing our real and well known economic problems—low investment, low skills, low growth, high unemployment and poor public provision—the Government walk away from their responsibility to tackle them. Instead of aiming for social progress at least in line with our Community partners, the Government opt out from any responsibility to do so.

This is an opt-out Government—but it is not simply a question of opt-out schools and hospitals; it is a case of opting out of the basic responsibilities of Government in a modern community. The Opposition assert with confidence and conviction that it is the inescapable responsibility of Government to build the strong economy and to create the fair society.

We deplore the fact that in the first Queen's Speech of a new Parliament the Government so carelessly abandon such a responsibility. Sadly, their complacency and inaction, and their lack of ambition for our country, will mean yet more missed opportunities for our people. That is why we will vote against the proposals in the Queen's Speech.

4.5 pm

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. Norman Lamont): It gives me particular pleasure to speak opposite the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) once more. Alas, I fear that our fruitful partnership is now drawing to a close——[HON. MEMBERS: "Are you getting the sack?"] The right hon. and learned Gentleman treated us to his usual speech. I, too, intend to make a familiar speech, but at least I have one justification which the right hon. and learned Gentleman lacks—the British people have given a ringing endorsement of the Government's economic policies, and decisively rejected the tired shop-worn policies of the right hon. and learned Gentleman and his colleagues.

For the right hon. and learned Gentleman, today's debate is a bit of a comedown. Only two months ago he was delivering what he called his shadow Budget. It was a grand occasion. There he stood, flanked by his shadow Treasury team, posing for photographs, on the very doorstep of the Treasury—only a few yards from the corridors of power. It was a happy picture but, alas, an ephemeral one.

Then the right hon. and learned Gentleman and his colleagues processed majestically across the road to the august wood-panelled halls of the Institution of Civil Engineers. There, surrounded by Red Books, tax tables and applauding acolytes, he delivered what he called the next Budget. His confidence was running high. On 16 March he assured us that the benefits of his Budget would be

"crystal clear to the people of this country",

who would therefore, he added confidently, be

"inclined to vote Labour".
As with some popular brand of cat food, eight out of 10 voters apparently preferred Smiths. As Oscar Wilde said, one would have needed a heart of stone not to laugh.

It was in that mood of self-congratulation that the right hon. and learned Gentleman progressed to Sheffield to be anointed there before an ecstatic crowd, in a sort of mixture of Götterdämmerung and the Eurovision song contest. It was one short step from Budget Monday to Sheffield Wednesday—and one more step towards Labour's calamity Thursday.

Any normal man might have been shaken by the events of 9 April—but not the right hon. and learned Gentleman, who is nothing if not resourceful and resilient. Having failed to get the one job that he had always wanted, he picked himself up from the floor and applied for another.

Perhaps that is why his speech today seemed directed not so much at the Government or at the country, but more at his right hon. and hon. Friends. It was the late Anthony Crosland who, with the merest hint of irony, once described the Labour party as
"the most sophisticated electorate in the world".
But I am afraid that by electing the right hon. and learned Gentleman as leader, the parliamentary Labour party will demonstrate beyond doubt that it is less sophisticated than the constituency of Basildon. Although the right hon. and learned Gentleman's shadow Budget may have fooled the Labour party, it did not fool Basildon.

In fact, the shadow Budget did not fool anyone; the people of this country quickly saw through the right hon. and learned Gentleman's so-called shadow Budget. The only people whom members of the Labour party were fooling were themselves. That was not for want of trying by the right hon. and learned Gentleman. Those of us who know him well and who have listened to him often know that he has one quality above all: he is extremely skilled at saying nothing. For months and years, he came to this House and made speeches—brilliant speeches—to great acclaim, but in all that time he never made the mistake of spoiling a good speech with a policy.

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Lamont: Then the election came and the right hon. and learned Gentleman made one fatal error. Inexplicably, he lost his nerve and he actually set out a policy. Admittedly, he did not go overboard; he set out only one, but that one policy was enough to lose Labour the election. It was to increase taxes—to be precise, to increase taxes by £7 billion.

It is not merely the Tory press, about which Opposition Members are so obsessed, which has doubted the wisdom of the right hon. and learned Gentleman's proposals. His hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) now discloses that all along he too had doubts. With characteristic understatement, he said on 15 April:

"I think it is fair to say that our tax proposals showed perhaps less than total sensitivity to some of the interests of the voters in the South of England".

Well, of course, the hon. Member for Dagenham may—I do not wish to attribute any motives to him—have a vested interest in doing down his right hon. and learned Friend. His hon. Friend the Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone), as befits a columnist for *The Sun*, put it rather more bluntly on 26 April:
"the increase at £21,000 cost us the election".

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Lamont: Labour's expert on presentation—the hon. Member for Hartlepool (Mr. Mandelson)—commented on 11 May:

"At the heart of Labour's problems was a deep-seated fear about the party's credibility . . . Tory claims were more believable than Labour assurances that it would only spend what the country could afford".

Mr. Robert Hughes: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Lamont: The right hon. and learned Gentleman's failure was summed up most damningly by the Labour party's chief press and broadcasting officer, Mr. Colin Byrne, who in a letter to *The Guardian* on 13 April had this to say about the right hon. and learned Gentleman:

"John Smith may be a very nice man. His smile may not frighten the voters, [but] his insistence on playing Labour's tax changes his way during the campaign . . . cost the Party dear."

Mr. Robert Hughes: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Lamont: Quite so. As someone once said, the right hon. and learned Gentleman has a brilliant mind—until he has made it up. Once his mind is made up, he does not like to change it.

Mr. Peter Hain (Neath): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. When will the Chancellor start talking about the economy and unemployment?

Madam Speaker: That is not a point of order for me.

Mr. Lamont: We all heard the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East say that he was always prepared to listen and to learn. Yet only last week, when the right hon. and learned Gentleman was interviewed by Brian Walden, he said that he thought that his tax plans "were sound and fair". He then said:
"they got a fair amount of assent from the electorate."
I repeat:
"a fair amount of assent from the electorate."
The right hon. and learned Gentleman appears to have learnt nothing about the election and the attitudes of the public towards taxation.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Now that that is over, let us talk about the future. In the weeks running up to the general election, the Chancellor handed out £6 billion in bribes. According to a good many people, in this autumn's Budget there is likely to be a hauling back of many of those bribes. We want to know how much those cuts will be. We also want to know whether the public sector borrowing requirement is likely to be £35 billion. Most of all, the Chancellor must answer the following question. He has said many times, before the election and after it, that the Government will balance the books in the medium term. When will that happen? Many of us believe that that medium term will expire long before the next general election. It is time that the Chancellor came clean.

Mr. Lamont: I thought that the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East was of the future and that I was talking about the future. Of course, I shall discuss exactly what the hon. Gentleman raised. I shall comment on it substantially. But we stand by our public expenditure plans. Of course, as I have emphasised, public expenditure

[Mr. Lamont]

will have to be controlled in the future. But our plans stand. We intend, as we have demonstrated in the Red Book, to balance the Budget over the medium term.

Mr. Keith Vaz (Leicester, East): Will the Chancellor give way?

Mr. Robert Hughes: Will the Chancellor give way?

Mr. Lamont: I will give way later.

The last time that I debated with the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East he drew attention, with what I thought was slightly uncharacteristic immodesty, to his personal poll ratings.

Mr. John Smith: Will the Chancellor give way?

Mr. Lamont: In a minute. Perhaps the lesson of the election is that the right hon. and learned Gentleman should have thought a little less about polls and concentrated a little more on policy. For it was at the very height of his popularity in those polls that he planted a bomb under Labour's election chances.

But the right hon. and learned Gentleman has not done too badly. If he becomes leader, as all the portents suggest, what now appears to have been a blunder on a massive scale will, to coin a phrase, have been a price well worth paying.

Mr. Smith: The right hon. Gentleman repeated the commitment to balance the budget in the medium term. Will he tell us by which year that will be achieved?

Mr. Lamont: The right hon. and learned Gentleman can look in the Red Book. He will see the path that is there. That is what we have defined as our policy. That is what we stand by.

Mr. Smith: Which year?

Mr. Lamont: That is in the Red Book.

Mr. Smith: The question is clear and simple. Which year?

Mr. Lamont: The answer is crystal clear. The process of moving towards balancing the Budget is set out and set out clearly in the Red Book. The right hon. and learned Gentleman will see—[AN HON. MEMBER: "The right hon. Gentleman does not know what the table says."] I do know what table 3.8 of the Red Book says. The last year of the projection in that table is close to balance.

Mr. Smith: We have all read the Red Book but the Chancellor must answer the question. In which year will balance be achieved?

Mr. Lamont: I have already answered the question. The table shows the PSBR coming down year by year. That is consistent with total debt being constant.

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn): First, further to refresh the Chancellor's memory slightly, the figure at the beginning is the current estimate of the PSBR. There are many stories, many of which we have good reason to believe, which say that the figure will not turn out to be £28 billion this year. So perhaps we have to recalculate what that reduction in PSBR will be over the period specified in the Red Book.

Secondly, the Chancellor says that the Budget will be close to balance at the end of the period set out in the Red Book. That is not quite the same as balance. Will he answer my right hon. and learned Friend's question? Over the four-year period specified in the Red Book, the last figure that appears for the PSBR is £6 billion. Is the right hon. Gentleman defining the medium term as four years, in which case it is not in balance, or is the medium term suddenly taking on an elastic quality?

Mr. Lamont: To take the initial point, we stand by our forecast for the PSBR. We are not altering it in any way. The right hon. Gentleman can follow the PSBR month by month. On the second point, I have already said to the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East that our policy is as defined in the table in the Red Book. We have said repeatedly that that is consistent with our policy. I am more than a little astonished at the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East going on and on about the state of public finances and the PSBR. I have never heard anyone on the Opposition Front Bench express the remotest interest in reducing the PSBR. The reason the Labour party lost the election was that its whole programme made pledge after pledge that Labour would make the finances of Britain utterly impossible.

In the years to come, while the right hon. and learned Gentleman is busy repackaging his policies we will continue with the same policies that brought us a fourth successive election victory. We will continue to pursue sound fiscal and monetary policies. We will keep firm control over public spending. We will continue to make progress towards our objective of a 20p basic rate for everyone and we will continue to reform the supply side and improve the underlying performance of the British economy.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Lamont: Later on. I should like to make a little progress.

Those are the policies set out in the Gracious Speech. They are the policies by which we stand, and the policies which will bring us steady and sustained growth.

In the real Budget on 9 March, I cut income tax for everybody. From next week those tax cuts will start to appear in pay packets. All 25 million income taxpayers gain from the introduction of the 20p rate, but the gains are proportionately greater for the low paid. Four million people on low incomes will see their income tax bill cut by a fifth, boosting their take-home pay and improving their work incentives.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Lamont: I have given way many times and I shall give way again but I wish to make progress.

One would have thought that such a policy—giving the most help to those with the greatest need—would have commanded the Opposition's support. And one would have been right. Just one month before the Budget, the Labour party published what it called a guide to policy—a pocket guide. It was quite clear. Under the heading "Fair Taxes" it said:

> "Labour plans to move towards a starting income tax rate of 20 per cent."

Labour's policy then was "Tax cuts No; 20p band Yes." During the Budget speech we saw the astonishing spectacle of the Leader of the Opposition and the right hon. and

learned Member for Monklands, East debating how to react. Of course, they could not be seen to support our tax-cutting proposals, but they also knew that they could not go into an election promising to put up income tax for every taxpayer. So suddenly their policy was turned on its head—"Tax cuts Yes; 20p band No."

You will not see a better somersault than that in this year's Olympics, Madam Speaker. No wonder it left the right hon. and learned Gentleman's credibility with the public in tatters. Small wonder that, despite the soft sell, the British people voted again for the only party that really believes in tax cuts.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Bringing the Chancellor back to the question of the PSBR, which many of us believe is critically important, is it true that Treasury officials and advisers have said that there will be an overshoot of as much as £4 billion in the PSBR in the current year, which would take it up to £32 billion or more? Is it true that they are also saying that there will be an overshoot of at least £4 billion, and perhaps £6 billion next year?

Mr. Lamont: The forecast that we have published is our forecast and we stand by it. We have also published our assumption—not a forecast—for the following year.

Touching on some of the problems mentioned by the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East, I do not underestimate the problems of recession and unemployment. However, with the election behind us, with confidence coming back and with interest rates lower, Britain's economic future is certainly brighter.

Only a few weeks ago, with his usual immaculate sense of timing, the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East was holding Germany up in this House as a model for Britain to emulate. But now in Germany we have seen labour unrest of the kind that here, thanks to our trade union reforms—incidentally, those reforms were strongly opposed by the right hon. and learned Gentleman—is now a thing of the past.

Of course, we cannot insulate ourselves from economic conditions throughout the industrialised world. In the early part of this year, that was compounded by the uncertainty that prevailed in the run-up to the election.

Mr. Beith *rose*——

Mr. Lamont: I shall give way in a minute.

What business would invest with the threat of a return to trade union militancy and bureaucratic interventionism of the kind put forward by the Opposition? Who would buy a car, knowing that an extra tax demand might drop through the letter box? Who would take out a mortgage with the prospect of a sharp rise in interest rates, which surely would have happened if Labour had won the election? It was not surprising that companies held back on investment and orders and that consumer demand remained subdued, as long as there was a chance that the Opposition might return to power.

Mr. Beith: The Chancellor slipped away very quickly from the issue of poverty. Does he remember, during the election campaign, being pressed about the widening gap between rich and poor? He said then that he did not believe that the gap had widened. Does he now accept that, during the period in which he has been in government, it has widened? How does he now propose to address it?

Mr. Lamont: Living standards have risen at all levels of income. Differentials have widened. Opposition Members are obsessed with differentials, but what matters to the poor is securing an increase in living standards. They would not have secured that under the Labour party, and they did not secure it when Labour was in office.

The message from forward-looking surveys of business and consumer confidence is clear. In April, consumer confidence rose to its highest level for more than three years. The CBI's industrial trends survey showed business optimism to be higher than at any time since 1988, and other business surveys in a number of regions and different sectors give the same message.

I am sure that my hon. Friends noticed the way in which the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East pooh-poohed the stock market. Yet, in every speech that he makes, he quotes the opinions of whoever he can find in the stock market who might remotely support his position. Already, the stock market and the foreign exchange markets have signalled their renewed confidence—their belief in the soundness of our policies. Last week, that confidence allowed me to cut interest rates by half a percentage point; it was the ninth cut since sterling entered the exchange rate mechanism.

Interest rates have now fallen by a full 5 per cent. from their peak, to a level below the average that obtained in the 1980s. The fall translates directly into increased disposable income for ordinary families with mortgages. Much of that increased disposable income has been saved, but I expect some of it to feed through into higher consumer spending in the months ahead. As the full effects of lower interest rates, lower inflation and rising confidence continue to come through, growth will become firmly established during 1992.

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby): Will the Chancellor give way?

Mr. Lamont: No.

In the last 18 months, the differential between British and German interest rates has been reduced from about 7 per cent. to just a quarter of 1 per cent. That is lower than it has been at any time in the past decade—inside or outside the exchange rate mechanism, I should add for the benefit of the hon. Member for Dagenham. That is a remarkable achievement, and it is a testimony to the credibility of our anti-inflationary resolve.

That resolve is demonstrated by the timing of last week's cut in interest rates. Some people pressed me, for political reasons, to cut interest rates before the election, but that would have been quite wrong. We cut interest rates not when it was politically convenient to do so, but when it was right and prudent.

Mr. Mitchell: Now will the Chancellor give way?

Mr. Lamont: No.

All that is pure Greek to the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East. Throughout last year, he called time after time for interest rate cuts, and every time we cut them he said that it was too little, too late. Only once did he change his line; and that—remarkably, astonishingly, mysteriously—was on the immediate run-up to the election. At that point, the right hon. and learned Gentleman said that any cuts in interest rates would be imprudent, and would simply be an election bribe.

[Mr. Lamont]

Now, however, normal service has been resumed. According to the right hon. and learned Gentleman, interest rate cuts before the election were bribes; after the election, they are too late. No one, of course, has ever accused the right hon. and learned Gentleman of consistency. Although he has regularly called for interest rate cuts, regardless of our current position in the exchange rate mechanism, and although he has always claimed that he would never contemplate devaluation, the markets—unfortunately for him—have never believed him. Had Labour won the election, interest rates would be heading up, not down.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: Will the Chancellor give way?

Mr. Lamont: No, I will not.

If the markets do not believe the right hon. and learned Gentleman, what on earth will they make of the hon. Member for Dagenham? We know that he takes a very different view from that of his right hon. and learned Friend: he thinks that the pound is overvalued, and that we should devalue it. If he becomes deputy leader, with the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East as leader, all the options will be covered. The Labour party will have a leader committed to maintaining the value of the pound, along with a deputy who thinks that its value is far too high and that it should be devalued.

I am reminded of Lord Marsh, who once addressed a meeting that I attended and someone in the audience shouted, "The Labour party's got no defence policy". He responded, "Rubbish. We've got two of them."

But I can suggest a simple way for the hon. Gentlemen to sort out their differences. The last time I spoke in the House, the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East never stopped challenging me to debates. We had several debates in the election campaign which I greatly enjoyed, and I thought they were very fruitful and enlightening. I hope that the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East will challenge his hon. Friend the hon. Member for Dagenham to a debate. And why stop at two? I think fairness would require that the distinguished columnist of *The Sun*, the hon. Member for Brent, East, should also be invited to participate. Perhaps I could chair the discussion and then we could all see that there was a free, fair and frank exchange of views between the participants.

We have to sympathise with the hon. Member for Dagenham. In order to make his leadership bid credible, he must explain why the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East got it all wrong and is not suitable to be leader of his party. But if he wants to be deputy leader, he has to profess his undying support for the right hon. and learned Gentleman, and proclaim that he will serve him loyally as his deputy. A dilemma that calls for a brave face; or possibly even two.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: I hesitate to bring the right hon. Gentleman back to the subject of the economy. Will he tell us how much real interest rates have gone up in the past two years and whether real interest rates have ever been higher?

Mr. Lamont: The hon. Gentleman knows that real interest rates throughout many parts of the world have been higher in the 1980s than they were in the 1970s. Our real interest rates are lower then those of several of our European competitors, including Germany. The hon. Gentleman should ask himself why real interest rates are high and what that says about the demand for capital and the supply of savings in the world. That is where the answer to his questions may be found. The hon. Gentleman should also remember that our interest rates are close to the average of the past decade and, furthermore, are close to those of our major competitors.

It was not merely the Opposition and the right hon. and learned Gentleman who urged on me the quick fix or the easy option. For somewhat different reasons, many in the media followed the same line. But we stuck to the policies that we knew were right for the long-term health of the country.

Some said that it was impossible to pursue sound policies and win the election. But the British people preferred to trust a Government who were prepared to show that they could take difficult decisions and would continue to bear down on inflation, rather than a party which, throughout the election, tried to pretend that there were bogus, fraudulent and easy solutions to recession.

Low inflation is the foundation upon which renewed growth must be built. Only with low inflation can businesses plan and invest. Only with low inflation can savers be confident that their investments will hold their value, and borrowers will not face interest payments spiralling out of control.

Thanks to our refusal to bow to short-term pressures, our inflation performance has improved out of all recognition. Underlying producer-output price inflation is lower than at any time since the early 1970s. I expect it to fall below 2 per cent. in 1983, and I am confident that we will see further falls in underlying retail price inflation.

The progress that we have made has been highly encouraging. Inflation is at German levels, and below the European average. But that does not mean that we can afford to relax. There are countries in the European Community whose inflation performance is better than ours. So, as far as I am concerned, inflation is still too high. Over the months and years to come, I intend to bring it down further. We have a once-in-a-generation chance to push towards price stability and, as the Prime Minister made clear, that is our policy.

Prudent management of the economy will also mean firm control over public spending. As my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary said last week, current plans already in the base-line provide for generous real increases in priority areas like health and education. While the ratio of Government expenditure to the gross domestic product may be expected to rise in a recession, there can be no justification for allowing the public sector to take an ever-growing share of the country's resources at a time of strong economic growth.

Mr. John Garrett (Norwich, South) *rose*——

Mr. Lamont: I shall give way in a minute.

On the contrary, as the economy picks up, I would expect to see public expenditure, as a proportion of GDP, resume its downward trend. Controlling public expenditure in Britain will also require restraining the growth of the European Community budget. That is a top priority.

Mr. Garrett: Can the Chancellor of the Exchequer explain how he can devote some of his speech, at least, to the economy without ever mentioning unemployment?

Does he agree that most independent forecasters think that unemployment will continue to rise and that it will probably reach, on the present bogus figures, at least 3·25 million next year? What is his forecast for unemployment and the colossal waste of resources and talent that it represents?

Mr. Lamont: The hon. Gentleman, who pays close attention to those matters, knows that in the Budget speech, during the election campaign and in every broadcast I said that we recognised the high level of unemployment and the fact that it was likely to rise for some time. We shall not take lectures from the Opposition who were putting forward proposals for a minimum wage that would have destroyed jobs in many sectors. It was admitted by the shadow transport spokesman, despite the disbelief of the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East. Many academic experts put the cost at hundreds of thousands of jobs, so we shall not take lectures from the Opposition.

As well as controlling public spending, we need to control that of the European Community.

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): Is not Mr. Delors right in saying that all those who supported the Maastricht agreement are in a thoroughly illogical position if they now complain about his demand for more funds? If we are to move toward more converged economies, is it not inevitable that we shall have to prop up—bribe, support or however else it may be described—all the weaker economies of Europe, which will lead to much more expenditure on European projects in this country and all those countries that are net contributors?

Mr. Lamont: I do not agree with my hon. Friend. Nothing in the Maastricht agreement, at this stage when we have not moved toward a single currency, could remotely justify the position that my hon. Friend outlines. I am amazed that, as my hon. Friend is meant to believe in market economies, the thought does not appear to have crossed his mind that countries should adjust their economies, costs and labour markets rather than get funds from the centre. That is not the way that we should proceed.

Mr. Flynn: What does the Chancellor say to the managing director of Inmos in my constituency, who told me on Friday that the reason why the British-invented transputer would in future be manufactured in France and Italy is that the French and Italian Governments are prepared to invest in a partnership deal with Inmos? Those jobs will now be stolen from Britain, as the product will be manufactured in France and Italy. Why can the French and Italian Governments invest in a British invention when the British Government cannot?

Mr. Lamont: If the hon. Gentleman is suggesting that it is the Government's role to invest directly in inventions and industry, I do not for one minute agree with him.

There must be greater priorities for the Community than further expansion of the Community budget. Community membership is, in principle, open to any democratic European state. That should be a higher priority. In years to come, the benefits of membership must be extended across Europe. That will certainly be at the top of our agenda for the presidency later this year.

Another international issue that will have a big impact on the economy and politics in the years ahead is the future of the former Soviet Union. Indeed, it already has—not many people have noticed the impact that the collapse of the former Soviet Union has had on trade between the former Comecon countries and on world trade generally. But a successful transition to a market economy in the former Soviet Union would benefit us all. It would boost trade, open up huge markets for western business and increase worldwide political stability. In contrast, a return to a closed society and a closed economy would be gravely damaging for all.

We in Britain have been ahead in pressing the case for financial support to underpin reform in the former Soviet Union. If the Russians are prepared to implement a comprehensive reform programme agreed with the IMF, the international community must stand ready to assist it. If it perseveres in its difficult but necessary course, we will continue to give it our support and assistance. I urge British business to take full advantage of the new opportunities now available, both in eastern Europe and in the former Soviet Union.

With low inflation and a prudent fiscal policy, British industry and business has the stable, low-tax environment it needs to plan and invest for the future. But strong growth will also depend on continued progress in strengthening the supply side of our economy. That does not mean the failed nostrums of bureaucratic red tape and Government intervention in industry, which the electorate has decisively rejected. The Labour party tries to recycle the failed policies of the 1960s under the more modern sounding name of "supply side socialism". There is no such thing.

The way to improve the productive capacity of our economy is not to try to increase the role of Government, but to curtail it; not to add to regulation and bureaucracy, but to reduce it wherever possible; not to restore trade union power, but to continue with the process of reform; not to renationalise or regulate, but to privatise; not to restrict or remove the rights of workers and employers to decide for themselves the terms and conditions of their employment, but to extend them. We will continue to do all those things.

As Europe approaches the single market, Britain is well placed to compete. As some of our partners falter, we have stable government, and a stable economic framework within which business can prosper. We are the most popular location for inward investment in Europe. We have the lowest rate of corporation tax anywhere in either the European Community or the G7 countries. Despite the slurs cast by the Labour party, we have a well-educated and highly trained work force.

Earlier in the year, the prospect of a Labour Government threatened all the achievements of the 1980s. That threat is behind us, and confidence in the British economy can grow. Soon, the only question will be how anyone ever thought that there was even a possibility of the election of a party pledged to reverse all the changes of the 1980s. As confidence returns and there is evidence of a strong and steady recovery, the wisdom of the choice of the British people will become clearer and clearer. That is why I urge my right hon. and hon. Friends to reject the amendment and to vote in support of the Government in tonight's Division.

4.45 pm

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): We have heard a curious opening speech from the Chancellor of the Exchequer. He covered many matters that did not seem to many of us to be relevant to the state of the economy and Government policy, but he omitted to say anything about two crucial sentences in the Queen's Speech which define his policy. I refer to the passage:

"My Government will pursue, within the framework of the exchange rate mechanism, firm financial policies designed to achieve price stability and maintain the conditions necessary for sustained growth."

That is the first sentence of that paragraph, and it is perhaps the first time that a Chancellor of the Exchequer has said to a British Parliament that the central discipline or guideline of his policies will be a framework of interest rates and exchange rates set, not by himself with the co-operation of the Governor of the Bank of England, but by the Bundesbank and the rate of inflation in Germany. The Queen's Speech contained the phrase "within the framework", which means that the Chancellor cannot cut interest rates beyond a whisker or a margin every six months, but will have to maintain real interest rates that are higher than ever before, as my hon. Friend the Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) rightly said.

Whether or not such a policy will be conducive to the conditions necessary for sustained growth is questionable. Certainly most European countries in the European monetary fund do not enjoy sustained growth or a sustained reduction in unemployment.

The Queen's Speech also states that the purpose of the policies, not just of this Session but of the Parliament, in the medium term, will be

"to ensure that the United Kingdom meets the convergence criteria set out in the Maastricht treaty".

The fact that the Chancellor of the Exchequer made no reference to that passage in the Queen's Speech is truly amazing. I am somewhat surprised that my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith), the shadow Chancellor, did not see fit to draw attention to that section.

What are the convergence criteria which we are pledged to meet in the medium term? I understand what is meant by medium term—about the year 1995-96. That seems to be the crucial year, as that is when the Commission is due to report on whether countries that wish to join the third stage of EMU are eligible to do so.

Mr. Budgen: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Shore: I shall give way later, but this is a complicated issue which I wish to explain.

There are four criteria. The first is that the rate of inflation in the United Kingdom has to be not more than 1·5 per cent. above that in the three best-performing European Community countries. Secondly, we must not have an excessive deficit—that is defined in the treaty and the protocol as being 3 per cent. of gross domestic product. Thirdly, we must bring the pound, already within the exchange rate mechanism, out of the present 6 per cent. band and into the 2·5 per cent. band. Fourthly, the yield on our gilts has to be no more than 2 per cent. above the yield on similar Government stock in the three best-performing Community countries.

The targets to which the Chancellor has committed himself are formidable. My right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East will understand why those targets do not refer to unemployment. The criteria cannot necessarily co-exist with a reasonable prospect of a fall in unemployment in this country. They take precedence over purely British interests. It may well be in the interests of the United Kingdom and other European countries to have lower interest rates and to pursue policies that will increase employment. But as long as we and those other European countries are committed—under the Maastricht treaty and the provisions relating to economic and monetary union—to convergence by 1996 at the latest, unless we achieve that aim we will fail to meet our obligations under the Maastricht treaty.

The Chancellor could say, "But we Conservatives have an opt-out clause." I see great advantages in an opt-out clause if we use it. But it is no good the Chancellor saying that he has an opt-out clause when his policy for the next four years is to put this country in the same position as those that do not have opt-out clauses. It is no good if he is prepared, if necessary, to squeeze the life out of this country's economy—as will have to happen in other countries—in order to meet our treaty obligations.

It is time that we had a real debate on this subject in the House. We heard speeches from the two Front-Bench spokesmen that did not touch on the major issue dominating this Parliament. It is extraordinary that we have not yet had a serious discussion on it.

Mr. Budgen: Is it not true that we have agreed not only that our economy should converge but that other economies should converge? That means that we have agreed to assist weaker economies so that they may converge. That is essentially an artificial activity, which runs against all market forces. Will the right hon. Gentleman explain how the convergence of the weaker economies can be achieved within the terms of the Maastricht agreement except by a massive increase in public expenditure? Does that not mean that Mr. Delors is right in saying that everyone who supported the Maastricht treaty must have known that to do so would mean a massive increase in regional and social funds, which would inevitably have to be paid for by the contributing countries of Europe—notably by Germany and Britain?

Mr. Shore: There would be great increases under the Delors plan. The budgets that he produced over some years increased those funds. In relation to the problems faced by the poorer southern European countries, those funds will make virtually no impact under the criteria set down. They will have to deflate and create unemployment, as will the other countries which are trying to subscribe to the conditions that will enable them to be considered as eligible for joining the third stage of the EMU.

What must we do to increase demand in Britain in order to lift output and reduce unemployment? Unemployment is not 2·6 million. It is much closer, as the Chancellor will agree, to 3 million, perhaps more, and still rising. The Government do not have a policy for that. They simply say that, if they can keep inflation down, expansion in the rest of the world will be sufficient, they hope, to lift the British economy. That is their principal hope.

We have advanced what people describe as supply-side socialism, which makes good sense over a long time, but we have not yet formulated a policy to lift demand. How are we to increase demand for the goods and services that our firms can currently produce, let alone encourage them

to invest more so that they can produce more in future? Where will the demand come from? If we cut taxes and increase public expenditure, there will be a negative effect on the current account balance. In the past four or five years, the balance of trade has been appalling and the deficit is due to rise still further in the current year.

There is only one way to get a benign increase in demand and it is to have demand from outside, an increase in exports, while carrying on with import replacement. That can be done only by cutting severely our competitive prices against those in other currencies. That means changing the exchange rate mechanism, Britain's position within it and the present value of the pound. I defy anyone to say where else the demand can come from.

To illustrate the point, I shall look at the other major economies. As everyone knows, Japan is in worse shape than it has ever been and it will not contribute to the increase in world output and trade, certainly not over the next two or three years. Recovery is taking place in the United States, but it is weak. At least the United States is free to cut its interest rate, which is at about 3 per cent., and that helps enormously. However, recovery in the United States cannot be predicated as the engine of growth for the rest of the world economy.

The economies in the other states of the European Community are not a promising sight. According to the Commission paper discussed in Lisbon, output this year is due to rise by 2·5 per cent. at best and next year it is due to rise by 1·7 per cent., which is well below the productive potential and growth in productivity of the Community. That means that there will be a further rise in unemployment in Europe as well. Therefore, Europe will not contribute to the revival of world trade and output that we all want.

I remind those who are over-enthusiastic about the benefits of the ERM and the EMU about unemployment in the European Community. France has had the "great benefit" of 10 years of membership of the ERM. Some might say that that is wonderful, but the unemployment level there is 10·2 per cent. Italy has also had the "enormous benefit" of membership and the unemployment level there was 10·7 per cent. at the beginning of the year. Our unemployment rate, at 10·4 per cent., is not much better, but it is not worse. As those who know anything about the matter can confirm, during most of the 1980s unemployment in the United Kingdom was lower than on the continent. That was because we had a free-floating exchange rate. As the Chancellor sometimes reminds us, at that time much investment by America and Japan was attracted to Britain.

I have one or two common-sense suggestions. First, no one who has looked seriously at the European, British and world economies can doubt that there is an overwhelming case for a realignment of currencies within the ERM. France and Italy and all countries with high and rising unemployment and far too moderate growth of output need and want that. Germany resists it, but surely pressure could be put upon that country or, failing that, the other countries could readjust their exchange rates in relation to the mark. That would be of enormous benefit, and only German economic egotism stands in the way of a necessary and helpful readjustment.

Secondly, we should give up the nonsensical notion of creating a single currency in Europe, with all that it would mean for deflation in our country and elsewhere. It would be better to give up that goal and settle for a regional IMF in terms of the exchange rate mechanism of which we are a member. I am suggesting fixed but changeable exchange rates, under which, in the IMF, we lived with considerable benefit for more than a quarter of a century after the end of the war. Surely that makes sense.

Thirdly, instead of going ahead with the effort to create a single currency, the ecu, would it not make sense in current world conditions to look upon it as a possible reserve currency that other currencies could use, one would hope, for international trade?

Those are perfectly practical proposals and they would have considerable support if the Government were prepared to take them up. If they do not, they will preside over another period of failure in terms of growth of output in the British economy and over a prolonged and desperately unhappy period of high unemployment.

4.57 pm

Mr. Tim Renton (Mid-Sussex): I do not intend to follow the extremely interesting points made by the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) because there will be other occasions on which I can do so, not least next week in the debate on the Maastricht treaty.

After eight years as a Minister and, before that, two or three years as a Parliamentary Private Secretary, I confess to some pleasure and even a feeling of freedom at being able to speak from the Back Benches. Nor do I have to find that narrow ground between subservience and rebellion about which my right hon. Friend the Member for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker) spoke so feelingly in moving the Loyal Address last week. In saying that, I hope that I am not causing too much trepidation to any of my old friends from the Whips' Office who are seated in front of me.

I warmly congratulate my right hon. Friend the Chancellor on the steadiness and determination with which he has brought down interest rates in the past few months. He has not listened to siren cries, not least those of the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith), that he should do more and do it more quickly or that he should devalue within the ERM. Consequently, there is every sign of a strong recovery and greater economic prosperity, and we probably have a better chance of consistent low inflation than for many years.

It is often said that the best spring is the one that comes late when the blossom can no longer be ruined by frost. I am sure that this will be true of the economic spring that we are starting to enjoy.

I am pleased also at the new promise made by my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade, who is supported by an extremely strong ministerial team, that he has every intention of listening sympathetically to the needs of industrialists. I confess that I do not know from where any great increase in his budget is likely to come, but it is extremely important that there should be strong recovery in manufacturing industry. That is badly needed, because recovery should not be won just in the service industries.

These are my bouquets and, before the experience of the too-violent economic swing of 1988-92 is put to bed and has become part of economic history, I should now like to risk, in the words just used by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer, ruining a good speech with the suggestion of a few policies.

[Mr. Tim Renton]

The first of the lessons of the past few years that must be learnt concerns how to deal with credit control. In saying that, I do not mean statutory control of lending. I remember well when that was tried in the 1960s. It did not work then, and when it was changed to a policy of competition and credit control by my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Sir Edward Heath), it released such a volume of new lending that it did not work then either. Therefore, we cannot follow the statutory route, but that means that there is a greater case for wisdom, prudence and good sense in lending by all the financial institutions.

A figure has often been bandied about. It is that, in 1988, the tax cuts introduced in his Budget by my good friend Mr. Nigel Lawson amounted to £4 billion, but they were followed by a £40 billion increase in credit—a ratio of 10:1. That was simply far too much. In my part of the world, the south of England, it led to a ridiculous excess in house prices in 1989, an excess also fuelled by the availability of 100 per cent. mortgages for houses or flats that were often bought at excessive prices. Those mortgages were on high fixed interest rates to start with or, if they began as variable loans, became fixed at a higher rate if the customer defaulted for even a month or two.

Many of us who represent constituencies in London or the south-east must have been horrified in recent months by the details of repossession cases brought to us by our constituents. We were horrified because they were lent far too much in the first place for houses that were excessively priced, and they had only to get into a small amount of trouble—one of the family or partners losing his or her job, for example—to become fixed on the course of repossession.

Against that background, there is a strong case for banks, building societies and all the respectable financial institutions jointly to look at the issue and collectively to publish guidelines, which should set sensible restrictions on mortgage lending. These should be made available to those who leave schools, universities and polytechnics, and to all first-time buyers. They could, for example, say that no mortgage should ever be more than 75 per cent. of the initial purchase value, that monthly repayments of capital plus interest should never be more, at the start, than 25 per cent. of the total salaries in the household. If a buyer cannot afford to buy 100 per cent. of the property that he wishes on those terms, then partial purchase, in which equity is shared with a housing association, is a far better solution.

Quite simply, we must, in the years ahead, avoid having another housing boom followed by a collapse such as that which we have had in the past four years. It was bad—desperately bad for some—not only for house owners but for the building industry. Hand-in-hand with that goes the fact that we cannot afford such violent fluctuations in interest rates. I appreciate that these are now less likely than they were. Unlike some hon. Members, I welcome our membership of the exchange rate mechanism. I wrote a letter to *The Times* in 1979 or 1980 suggesting that we should join the ERM at the same time as the Republic of Ireland. I hope that we shall move quickly to the narrow band within it.

One result of the ERM is that it depoliticises the movement in interest rates. They become much more mechanistic. Against that background, I urge my right hon. Friends on the Treasury Bench to consider the denationalisation of the Bank of England, which was nationalised in 1945. This move was considered between 1970 and 1974 by the Government of my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup. It should be on the agenda again now.

We all know that the Bank of England, as with all central banks, has to be denationalised before the decision to set up and join in a European central bank becomes effective. Denationalisation would clearly mean greater independence for the Bank of England. I am not saying that this should happen because I believe that all its decisions and views are necessarily and invariably wise. That was clearly not so in the case of the Bank of Credit and Commerce International. However, it is good sense to have some years of experience of an independent domestic central bank before taking the final decision on the European central bank. This would not be a bad learning curve for us politicians, nor for our bankers.

I shall now move from the macro-economy to the micro-economy. As Minister for the Arts, I was delighted by the decision, taken before the election, to set up a national lottery. I had campaigned for it for all the 17 or 18 happy, exciting and fruitful months that I held the job of Arts Minister. I had quickly come to the conclusion that, while every Minister in that position might argue with the Treasury each year and get a few million more for the Arts Council or the museums and galleries, serious signs of more money could come only from a national lottery. I was delighted when my right hon. Friend the Member for Mole Valley, then Home Secretary, put his weight behind the argument, convinced our colleagues and ensured the publication, before the general election, of a White Paper supporting a lottery.

Obviously, Treasury Ministers were harder to convince. They have had their doubts about a national lottery for 40 years. The Treasury does not like hypothecation of money. That means that it does not like to see relatively large sums of money, over which it does not have direct control and in defence of which the spending Minister does not have to come each year to argue his case, going annually to specific causes and projects.

The then Chief Secretary to the Treasury now enters the stage as the new Secretary of State for National Heritage, and I am delighted that he has had such a Pauline conversion that the Bill to enact a lottery is now to be his. It will be organised, drafted and produced by his Department rather than by the Home Secretary. No Minister changes his colours with his job so becomingly as an ex-Treasury Minister. To use an operatic phrase, "cosi fan tutte".

The national lottery has the potential to be an enormous success. I studied its workings with relevant Ministers in both Ireland and Greece, and it is very successful in those countries. The proceeds should be concentrated on capital projects in the arts, sport and the heritage.

Mr. Beith: Would the success of a national lottery depend on its enjoying monopolistic powers or privileges that other forms of gambling did not have?

Mr. Renton: I will not be drawn down that route this afternoon as I must not speak for too long. However, I would love to debate that matter with the hon. Gentleman on another occasion.

As foreshadowed in our election manifesto, I hope that there will be a millennium fund into which some of the proceeds from the national lottery will go every year, so that in different parts of the country we can build new theatres, new concert halls and new sports stadia of which future generations can be very proud.

Within the funds of that national lottery, I would plead for an endowment fund of, perhaps, £30 million a year to be set aside especially to keep in this country those pictures that are so important to our national heritage. Although the idea of a list of objects that can never be exported has been examined in recent months, it is, in my view, neither a practical nor a fair solution. However, we cannot rely on Andrew Lloyd Webber to keep all of those beautiful objects in this country. I had always hoped that, when a national lottery was established, some money from it would be dedicated specifically to the purpose of keeping in this country those great works of art that are so important to our heritage. It is also important that they stay here for the enjoyment and education of future generations.

The key to the success of the national lottery must be that there will be new money. It must come from those who are participating in a lottery, perhaps for the first time, and who are quite happy in the knowledge that if they do not win a prize the balance of the fund will go to a good cause such as the arts, heritage or, perhaps, even one of the smaller charities that they support.

It follows from that statement that the lottery proceeds cannot just be a substitute for existing Treasury funds, nor can they bear an excessive tax rate. If Treasury Ministers will refrain from regarding the lottery as a successful milch cow, the national lottery will enter our scheme of things as it has in virtually every other European country, where it has enjoyed enormous success. It will give a tremendous boost to the arts, to heritage, to sport and, through them, to tourism. All those are great earners for our economy and they are all vital to our enjoyment of life.

5.12 pm

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): I welcome you, Madam Deputy Speaker, to the Chair. We look forward to you presiding over our debates. I also welcome the right hon. Member for Mid-Sussex (Mr. Renton) to the Back Benches. As a Minister, he was always so genial and courteous that even the most unpleasant things that he said were sugared with a pleasant coating.

I found myself in unusual agreement with much of the earlier part of the right hon. Gentleman's speech when he referred to the independence of the central bank, the narrow bands of the exchange rate mechanism and the benefits of the ERM. I have reservations about the latter part of his speech on the national lottery, partly because I am convinced that it cannot be made to work unless it is, in effect, a nationalised lottery—that is, a nationally-sponsored lottery that enjoys privileges denied to other raisers of charitable funds by means of lotteries. That would be in direct contravention of what is supposed to be the Government's policy—that one organisation with national sponsorship and approval should not be given privileges and rights over the entire private sector. What could be more private sector than voluntary fund raising of that sort? However, that is an argument for another day.

There are always phrases that catch one's attention in the Gracious Speech, in the economic and in other spheres. I was struck by the inclusion, for the first time in a Gracious Speech, of an explicit commitment to price stability. That commitment was reiterated by the Prime Minister in what my right hon. Friend the Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) called "rich man's Sheffield". I am, of course, referring to the Prime Minister's speech to the Institute of Directors when he said, "Price stability, yes price stability"—words that have not featured overmuch in the Government's vocabulary of late. However, I welcome that commitment, even though I think that the Government will have to do some of the things to which the right hon. Member for Mid-Sussex referred if they are to meet it. Central bank independence is one of those things.

There are other interesting changes of phrase. The balancing of the budget is no longer to be over the cycle, but over the medium term. There have been some discussions today about what that medium term is. When it was over the cycle, it reminded me of the trick cycles that we used to see in circuses, where the front end became detached from the back end and the cycle could therefore be stretched to an infinite length—or at least the total length of the rider of that rather dangerous machine. The cycle certainly stretched to infinite length when it came to balancing the budget.

It is not even clear that balancing the budget is the most appropriate guide to Government policy. It may be more appropriate to have public sector borrowing in some circumstances and public sector debt repayment in others. Some of the Government's critics, especially in the Labour party, have focused heavily on the lack of certainty that the Government will achieve that balanced budget, but the Government should question whether a balanced budget is actually the right objective.

There is also an interesting phrase about the share of national income taken by the public sector, which is to be reduced. I take that to be a rephrasing of the previous commitment to reduce public expenditure as a share of gross domestic product. The logical conclusion is that eventually there will be no public expenditure. The Government have never clarified the purpose of perpetually reducing public expenditure as a share of GDP, unless they believe that at any given time it is too high. We believe that the extent of public expenditure should be determined by a balance of the needs for which the public sector provides and what the economy will stand—that is, whatever will enable the economy to function effectively—rather than being determined by some commitment constantly to decrease it or, for that matter, constantly to increase it.

There is also a phrase about promoting market mechanisms. That is mealy mouthed. The Government should be saying that they will vigorously promote competition and attack monopoly, but perhaps the language is too strong for a Government who privatised industries by turning public monopolies into private monopolies, instead of breaking them up as would have been appropriate in a number of cases.

On the Government's privatisation plans, the Gracious Speech says:

[Mr. A. J. Beith]

"Legislation will be introduced to return British Coal to the private sector."

It may have escaped the Government's notice, but British Coal was never in the private sector. There used to be a series of coal companies in the private sector, some of which had a bad record on the treatment and safety of their employees.

If the Government were to put British Coal into the private sector without at the same time developing an energy policy, they would unleash the coal industry into a very much rigged and monopolistic market, in which the generating companies, which have excessive control of the energy market, could continue their short-term policy of introducing gas generation. The nuclear sector would continue to be heavily featherbedded by public subsidy and guarantee. British Coal would not be in anything even resembling a fair market, still less a market where proper account is taken of the fact that, once a pit is closed, it cannot be reopened.

There is certainly scope for private investment and private activity in the coal industry. Over many years my hon. Friend the Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) has made a powerful case for taking away from British Coal the mineral rights on which its mining is based and placing them under proper Government control. The winner of the coal would not then be the giver-out of the rights. We need a better balance than currently exists. Simply to put British Coal into the private sector without a proper energy policy could, in the long term, prove to be a disaster.

The Government's words on the rail service are much more cautious. The Gracious Speech states:

"Legislation will be introduced to enable the private sector to operate rail services."

We do not disagree with that proposal. We have been arguing for some time that there is scope for a privately run rail service on the rail system—that is, provided that there is a decent rail system, properly invested in, on which it can run. If there are proceeds to be gained from that process, they must be used to improve the network. Other resources will also be needed to bring the network up to the standard at which the existing services can run properly, let alone additional private sector services. We welcome the Government's move towards our position from one of apparent wholesale privatisation of British Rail, which any railway expert—including the hon. Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley)—knows is simply not a practical proposition.

All that the Gracious Speech says about agriculture is that

"Legislation will be introduced to promote improvements in agricultural marketing."

That is all well and good, but what is really needed is a clear indication of the Government's approach to the future of the industry. Do the Government intend to continue to argue that Mr. MacSharry's proposals are totally misguided and that nothing of the kind is necessary, or do they recognise that there will be some reforms and that they ought to influence those reforms so that British agriculture remains viable and is able to meet environmental objectives? We need a much clearer policy statement from the Government.

What has changed since the general election? Has anything changed so much as to justify the degree of complacency that characterised most of the Chancellor's remarks? During a general election campaign one cannot be surprised if the Chancellor of the Exchequer puts the best possible construction on the state of the economy. General elections are like that. The best possible sales line has to be put forward. But the election is over now. We do not need a re-run.

Mr. George Mudie (Leeds, East): Some of us would like one.

Mr. Beith: Other elections are going on elsewhere in the House. Some of the speeches during the last few days will have a considerable bearing on the outcome of those elections, but the general election is out of the way for the Chancellor of the Exchequer. He can therefore make a more objective assessment.

The election has removed one of the elements of uncertainty. Firms that delayed investment can now invest without having to wait to see what kind of Government they get. That may help to bring us a little more quickly out of the dreadful recession that we are experiencing. If, however, the Government say how much better off we are after the election, why did they not call it a great deal earlier and end the uncertainty? The election could have taken place many months, even a year, ago.

The interest rate cut of 0·5 per cent. is also welcome, but its impact will be limited. It is a sign that the Chancellor is being deservedly cautious until it can be made clear to the markets that there is no prospect of a devaluation of sterling and that Britain's interest rate policy will not be based on short-term political considerations. Again, now that the election is out of the way, there is no need for short-term political considerations. The fight against inflation must continue. We are a stage nearer in the cycle to recovery, but it is a painfully slow process.

What else has changed? There has been a change in the German economy and in German politics. The tendency for Ministers to crow about that is misguided, for two reasons. They underestimate the resilience of the German economy and the determination of the German people to make reunification work. Moreover, Ministers are misguided if they believe that it is to Britain's advantage for the deutschmark no longer to be a bulwark against inflation in Europe. If it ceased to be so, we should soon have to find another one. Sterling is not yet in that position. It would be rather nice if it were, but it is not. It would not be to our advantage if we suddenly found that that underpinning of the system was no longer there.

Those are the positive points that the Chancellor can justifiably quote, but what about the other side of the coin? Certain things have not changed. Unemployment is still high, is certain to remain so and to go higher. Bankruptcies continue, and our infrastructure continues to decline. One has only to consider the horrific backlog of repairs to schools. We could all quote examples from our constituencies. Our education and training system remains woefully inadequate for the needs of the country. Housing receipts remain frozen and local authorities are therefore unable to meet dire housing needs.

For these reasons, the case for additional investment of the kind that was argued for during the election campaign by both my party and the Labour party must be considered by the Government. If recovery is coming more quickly than we believe, the opportunity to invest when it is cheaper and not inflationary to do so will slip by. If the Government are right and recovery is just around the

corner and the green shoots are really coming through, it is all the more important to ease the unemployment problem and to secure some of that public investment while the circumstances are most favourable. If we are right and they are wrong, it would help to bring about recovery if we invested in those areas that could create jobs now while at the same time providing us with assets for the future.

There are other long-term issues to be addressed that the Chancellor failed to address today. There is the long-term anti-inflation policy. I do not believe that we shall have a satisfactory long-term anti-inflation policy unless there is a combination of an independent central bank and the narrow bands of the exchange rate mechanism. That is the way to ensure that in the longer term we have lower interest rates. That is the only way to remove the premium that the market expects if it is to hedge itself against the belief that the currency might be devalued. *[Interruption.]* There are voices on both sides of the Chamber, including that of the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell), who argue for precisely that. So long as the hon. Member for Great Grimsby is around —so vocal and so active—the markets may be right to believe that one day the currency may be devalued.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: May I remind the hon. Gentleman that in 1925 Lord Keynes reminded Winston Churchill that the pound was grossly overvalued? Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the pound is overvalued? If it is overvalued, we need high interest rates to keep it that way. To go into the narrow band would simply mean that interest rates would have to go even higher to keep them in the narrow band.

Mr. Beith: Interest rates have to remain high over a longer period because of the belief that the currency may be devalued. Until it is believed that the United Kingdom currency is secure and that there is an anti-inflation culture in this country, there will continue to be a premium on interest rates. When the hon. Gentleman sought constantly to intervene during the Chancellor's speech I was reminded of the exchange that took place on the "Jimmy Young Show" when I appeared with the Chancellor of the Exchequer. At one point Jimmy Young said, "Don't ask Norman another question, otherwise I won't be able to get in before there's a break for the music." The hon. Gentleman has got his break and he continues with his familiar cry, which is echoed by voices on the Conservative Benches. I do not say that they should not announce their beliefs: they hold them most sincerely. However, they are a sufficient reason for people to believe that we might well seek to devalue our currency. That is a sure way to high interest rates, long term.

The Government must also address the competition policy issue, in which they still show insufficient interest. Sir Leon Brittan has become much more interested in competition policy since he became a commissioner and he is doing an energetic job in that connection. However, that has not yet led to greater interest in the issue among his friends back home.

Furthermore, the Government have not addressed the immobility issue, which is the result of housing problems. There are two kinds of immobility, one of which was referred to earlier by the right hon. Member for Mid-Sussex. I refer to those who bought their homes when the market was artificially high, as a consequence of a combination of misguided Government policies. They cannot move because they cannot sell their homes. If they did so, it would be at a price that would not enable them anywhere near to repay their mortgages. Other people cannot move because they cannot rent a house; houses are not being built and the waiting lists are therefore enormous. For most people, the national mobility scheme just does not work because they are unable to find accommodation elsewhere in the country.

I referred in an intervention to another issue that the Government still fail to address. The Government continue to duck the poverty issue and all the problems that it involves. For example, the withdrawal of benefits from young people continues. The social fund is inadequate. Health charges, the impact of the poll tax and the likely impact of the council tax on a large number of people create great problems, yet the Government do not appear to believe that there are problems. I am amazed by the Chancellor's lack of understanding. It is true that the gap between rich and poor has widened. All the evidence is there to demonstrate that that is so. In January 1992, "Economic Trends" showed that in 1979 the poorest fifth of the country had about 10 per cent. of post-tax income, while the richest fifth had 37 per cent. Ten years later, the poorest fifth had only 7 per cent. and the richest fifth 43 per cent. The gap widens and widens. It is indicative that the Chancellor did not realise how that gap had widened when he was questioned on radio about it by a member of the public. We have to keep on reminding him.

During the election my party found that there was some willingness to accept that there has to be a redistribution of tax to deal with this problem. We also found great fear of what Labour would do with the tax system if it was given the chance. Many people did not think that Liberal Democrats would be in a powerful enough position to block Labour's tendency to go over the top or to kill the goose that laid the golden egg. That fear emerged as a powerful reality in the last few days of the election campaign. It certainly cost my party seats, and without it a number of Conservative Members would not be sitting on the Government Benches.

I still believe that the British electorate are willing to support measures of redistribution if they are kept within bounds that they feel they can manage. British politics has not given them the opportunity to support such policies. The Government made a political point of arguing in the opposite direction, and survived by doing so. The party in the strongest position, potentially, to do something about it frightened large sections of the electorate away from itself and from us. The majority of people voted not for this Government but for other parties. It is vital, therefore, that over the next few years the Government consider the needs and problems that so many of those people face. If the Government are to persist in their view that the electoral system can allow a minority to become the majority in the House—a view with which we profoundly disagree—they had better try to vindicate it by showing that they are prepared to govern for the whole of the country, including the majority who voted against them, and that they are prepared to address the needs, problems and personal tragedies that so many of those people have had to face without the complacency that has been evident in Government contributions to this debate.

Our amendment expresses some of those concerns and shows how they could be dealt with. The Government now

[Mr. Beith]

have the opportunity to address them, and if they legitimately believe that they are the Government of the whole country they should do so.

5.31 pm

Mr. Matthew Carrington (Fulham): The most important part of the Queen's Speech is the commitment to bring other countries into the European Community. Many of us have been concerned about the Commission's tendency to centralise decision making, concentrating power on itself and removing some of the rights and privileges of the House.

That worrying trend will be altered only by expanding the Community. The best way of doing so is to bring in those European Free Trade Association countries that wish to join the Community and they are the countries that will find it easiest to make the adjustment. The most important challenge will be to bring in the fledgling democracies of eastern Europe, which are so fragile and economically backward. The assistance that they will need from the European Community will make the unification of Germany seem extremely easy.

We should not be the least surprised that bringing in those countries will be difficult, because their economies are in a poor state. East Germany was by far and away the most developed of the east European countries, yet the unification of Germany has cost four or five times more than even the most pessimistic estimates. That massive change will not be brought about quickly, but it must be done as rapidly as possible.

An expanded EC has two ways of proceeding. First, the decision-making power of the Community may override the wishes of national Governments because the Community will become too large to be able to take decisions on the basis of negotiation and co-operation, as they are taken at the moment. The alternative is to define more precisely what decisions—and only what decisions—can be taken by the European Community centrally, and then to ensure that the decisions that are not taken centrally are reserved to the component countries.

The second way of unifying the Community is the only method that will be practical once the European Community is larger than the Twelve and consists of 20 or 24 members. Subsidiarity will have to apply to monetary policy and monetary union. There is no way of avoiding that. The only way forward is to set up, as the Maastricht agreement proposes, a central bank to deal with monetary policy on a Europe-wide basis. Monetary union will be important to the development of the Community, but it must be clearly defined. It will be of much benefit to business. Getting away from floating exchange rates or exchange rates that vary will remove uncertainty for business and trade across Europe, and that will be vital in enabling the European Community to develop.

One of the benefits of German unification is that it will ensure that the German dominance of monetary policy will begin to diminish. In the past few years, the Bundesbank has dictated monetary policy across European economies. Without unification, European monetary union would increasingly have been dictated by the Germans and we would have had to accept their interest rate decisions and other decisions that would have affected our economy. With the weakness of the German economy, however temporary, the Germans may start to recognise that they will have to transfer a lot of the effective decision-taking power of the Bundesbank to the European central bank. The Germans will not have the same control as they would otherwise have had.

It is important that the decision on the location of the European central bank rules in London. London must remain the major centre for the financial markets of Europe. If the central bank were located in one of the European financial centres—either Frankfurt or Paris—London would experience serious difficulty in retaining its dominance as the time zone financial centre for our part of the hemisphere, which is so important.

The central bank must be located in London, but if it is not possible to persuade the French or the Germans to agree to that, it must be located somewhere other than Frankfurt or Paris—it does not matter where—and somewhere which is not likely to be the nucleus of a financial centre.

Mr. Mudie: Leeds.

Mr. Carrington: Leeds would be good. We need to fight extremely hard to ensure that the central bank comes to London.

One of the consequences of monetary union will be that the barriers of entry into the Community will be very hard to overcome for the countries of eastern Europe. The problems of joining a hard currency area will add to their enormous difficulties of modernising and strengthening their economies, and they will have even worse problems if they have to join the Community too rapidly. They will need to maintain exchange rate flexibility and to do so as their trade increases with the Community. We must ensure that they have access to our markets on an increasingly open basis so that they can develop their industries even, to some extent, at the cost of our own.

The alternative to giving those countries access and to allowing them exchange rate flexibility will be something for which there is already pressure from inside the European Community itself—massive transfers of payment from the richer to the poorer countries. One way of overcoming the deflationary effects of joining a strong currency area is for the countries that can sustain the strength of the currency to make payments to the poorer countries. I do not believe that that will be politically acceptable. I represent a London constituency that has many problems of urban deprivation and it would be hard for me to explain to my constituents that they must pay substantial sums to support other economies. It would be unpopular, to say the least.

The traditional alternative to massive transfers of resources has been major population shifts, which is how America solves the problem. The American population is and always has been highly mobile. The Americans have avoided one state having to make payments to another in order to support it by moving the population as the economy alters. That alternative is not acceptable. The only realistic option is to maintain exchange rate flexibility, which can at least soften the problem of transition from a weak to a strong economy.

It is becoming clear that, except for perhaps a few EFTA countries, the expansion of the Community will be a long-term business. It may be possible to achieve that expansion by the year 2000, but the east German experience suggests that it will take considerably longer.

At this stage, we are incapable of predicting the necessary time frame. That means that many countries with fledgling democracies and with economies going through difficult times will be sitting on the outside during a time of rapid development within the Community. We must find a way of bringing them into the decision-making process ahead of their joining the Community on a proper and complete basis. We must do so to a greater extent than is afforded by the associate status for countries planning to join. We must bring them in so that the shape of the Community is the shape that it will have to have when they are members.

Monetary union is important, but there is a danger that it will be followed—as night follows day—by fiscal union. Fiscal union is far less acceptable and is a considerable danger. There is no doubt that some people who advocate monetary union inside Europe also look forward to fiscal union when, effectively, tax and monetary policy will be dictated from the centre. I do not believe that one needs to follow the other, but we must be aware of the danger. It must be specifically guarded against in the treaties, by the way in which monetary policy is organised and controlled and in the details of the establishment of the European central bank. The danger must be borne in mind so that we can ensure that it does not materialise.

The principal goal during our presidency of the European Community is to start the process of the expansion of the Community. It is perhaps the most historic stage through which the Community has passed for some years. It is a difficult one and it could be very expensive, but it will be extremely important and worth while.

5.44 pm

Mr. Robert Sheldon (Ashton-under-Lyne): It is a pleasure to have an equal number of females in the Chair and it is my privilege to congratulate you, Madam Deputy Speaker, on your appointment.

In his interesting speech the hon. Member for Fulham (Mr. Carrington) spoke about economic and monetary union. I agree with only a little of what he said, but it was worth listening to and I shall respond to it later. I deal first with the unspoken theme of the Queen's Speech—unemployment—to which my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) referred.

The Government came to power in 1979 and we experienced the deepest recession of the post-war years. They ended their period in office, up to the recent election, with the longest recession. It became clear that the level of unemployment that we suffered as a consequence was here to stay. In view of the present mass unemployment which has lasted longer than it did in the 1930s, few people will deny that the scars which took a generation or more to heal—and many still remain—will be with us again as a result of this long recession and long period of high unemployment. The Queen's Speech did not even refer to the subject, so we must assume that the Government have nothing in mind other than to wait for outside sources to bring about an improvement.

The promotion of manufacturing industry which the Labour party has—rightly—advocated for so long is crucial to create output. We shall increase output if we start thinking in terms of capital allowances and training but they will not mop up unemployment. Productivity grows about as fast as production, so as production increases, productivity also grows rapidly. Years ago, we used to speak in terms of automation and talk about the factory that could operate without people. That vision was too far ahead of its time, but one element of that vision was that in the future we would need relatively few people to produce the extra goods required.

There is a case for capital allowances to produce extra output, skills and production. They would also produce an employment gain, but the main effect would be on our balance of payments and our balance of trade. We must look to areas of the economy other than manufacturing industry to deal with unemployment. Manufacturing industry is the central problem facing us today but it is not central to the reduction of unemployment—for that we must think in terms of the construction industry and, like Beveridge, of roads and house building, and of the personal services that can come about only as a result of the wealth created by the manufacturing industries.

We must think about how much unemployment costs us, quite apart from the misery and wretchedness with which we are familiar from our weekly visits to our constituencies. The £20 billion that we spend on mass unemployment is probably the best example of failure to get value for money. What do we get for the £20 billion that we wantonly distribute? We get two societies—a society of those who have and one of those who have not. We get child poverty and disaffection, and the riots in Los Angeles have shown the potential for violence in a society in which people—especially the young—feel that they have no part to play.

Our expenditure results in the dependency culture which is so frequently condemned by the Government but about which they seem to do very little. Who is fostering this dependency culture? The Government say that it is a short-term problem and that if we get inflation down all will be well. However, we have had mass unemployment for 13 years and—my goodness—13 years is long enough to test any theory.

One difficulty in the dependency culture is that benefits must compete with low-paid jobs. The Government's solution is to cut benefits to produce competition so that people are forced into low-paid jobs. I am sure that we all agree that the earning of a living and the proper employment of the individual must benefit society as a whole.

One difficulty is that today a substantial cost is associated with the very fact of earning a living. Once, people could walk down the road to the mill or factory; they carried a snack and wore old clothes to work. But today is different. Transport costs many pounds a week, and constitutes a substantial proportion of the cost of earning a living. The cost of meals and of normal clothes also represent a large element. All that added together means that a lot of money is deducted from the low pay which is all that is normally available to many people, so that it is hardly worth their while to get a job.

None of that expenditure is allowed to be offset against income tax. We know why not: apart from the cost to the Exchequer, the Inland Revenue would fear being inundated with claims. However, it is time that we examined the possibility afresh, if we are serious about reducing the factors which make people worse off at work than on benefit. What would be the cost of allowing some such expenditure to be offset against tax? We give a tool

[Mr. Robert Sheldon]

allowance to engineers, and there are clothing allowances in special cases. We should consider the whole subject again, and find ways of bringing people into work.

Mr. James Couchman (Gillingham): The right hon. Gentleman has just made an interesting suggestion. For those who are given company cars, home-to-work journeys are described as private mileage. Does he wish to make the same sort of allowances for them as for people travelling by public transport? A substantial reduction in the tax gathered from people with company cars seems to lie down that road.

Mr. Sheldon: I simply put up an idea for further examination. Something like the tool allowance would be one way of handling the matter. Whichever way one looks at it, however much might be spent on such allowances, it would be small in comparison with the £20 billion that we squander on creating the kind of misery that we see around us.

From the beginning of this Government—and, in fairness, I must say, before that too—the "housing ladder" has been a dangerous concept. Buying a house is fine; so is moving to a larger house as the family grows; but the idea of house purchase as a suitable investment is wrong.

Housing is a form of consumption. It is necessary, but it has to be balanced by other forms of consumption. Whereas price inflation without increases in pay settlements reduces consumption, house inflation increases consumption—and it does not even appear in the retail prices index. House price inflation makes house owners feel that they have a large amount of extra money, and they are pressed on all sides to capitalise on that and to take out big loans to buy the things that they want. They feel that they are in a strong position.

There are great advantages in house purchase. Tax relief on mortgages costs £5 billion to £7 billion a year —and then there is schedule A, under which it is more profitable to spend money on doing up one's house than to invest it elsewhere. There is capital transfer tax relief between spouses, and capital gains tax relief on one's main residence. Those are massive advantages. Why are we giving them, when housing is a form of consumption? We should realise that, although certain aspects of housing are essential, other aspects of it are less so—and are, in fact, a form of consumption. We should look at housing afresh, and say that we should not give those reliefs.

Too many people have looked upon house purchase as a form of wealth creation, and that was what fuelled so much spending in 1988-89. In the aftermath of the stock exchange slump, Nigel Lawson prepared a relaxation—but the stock exchange is not the best indicator of how the economy is faring. It affects well-to-do people, and also pension entitlements. Because of rises on the stock exchange, the value of pension funds increases, and therefore so do people's pension entitlements. But for most people there is no close connection between the FT index and their pensions. For most people, their pension is a long way off and does not affect their expenditure patterns. People do not make spending decisions based on the growing value of their pension entitlement. For one thing, they do not know about it; for another, it is not a matter of immediate concern.

For most people, the value of their house—which may have risen by many thousands of pounds—was far more important. The stock market fell, but house owners were sitting on over-appreciated assets, which made them feel wealthy. Banks and financial institutions begged them to use that extra value to improve the quality of their lives. Nigel Lawson, with his eyes constantly on the City of London, did not realise that what was happening elsewhere was more important.

Any Government would have to reconsider mortgage interest tax relief. Clearly, one could not remove the reasonable expectations of people already engaged in the process, but a long-term phasing out could begin.

Both the hon. Member for Fulham and my right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) referred to European monetary union. In theory, EMU is acceptable—if we could achieve convergence on economic matters. Financial matters are easy, but economic matters are different. Once we had achieved convergence on economic aims and ends, we could achieve the growth, prosperity and economic development. My right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East was right to use that as a criterion early in the debate. If there were convergence among the economies of Europe there could be a single trading area, with similar taxes, comparable welfare treatment, compatible living standards, employment opportunities and so on. But that is a long way off.

In past years this country has given billions of pounds in transfer payments to the regions. Even when the sum was much larger than it is today—not much goes that way now—there was never enough money to even out the great disparities in our country. Scotland and the regions received large payments—unfortunately, with limited effects.

Within the United Kingdom there have at least always been two safety valves. They are not very good, but they have helped to limit the damage of real and perceived regional differences. One safety valve has been our people's willingness to allow part of what would be their living standards to be used to help other areas of the country. That has been most valuable. The other safety valve has been that some people have been able to move to more prosperous parts of the country. "Getting on one's bike" can seriously damage the areas that export their best talents, but, in the absense of proper resources, it provides some opportunities which help at least to keep the country together.

As the hon. Member for Fulham said, such opportunities are far more limited across national frontiers within the Community. Germans cannot be expected to subsidise the Italian south, nor Belgians to transfer resources to the north-east of England, to anything like the extent that national Governments are willing to make such transfers within one country. Furthermore, people cannot cross language frontiers and expect to be treated much better than as guest workers, with few rights and expectations—certainly fewer than those of the people of the host country.

Economic disparities within the Community will not be reduced by anything like the amount required by the inability to alter the exchange rate or to undertake national policies to enable such damaged communities to recover. People do not have much sympathy with the

economic problems of other countries. We always think that our neighbours' economies are easy to run—if only they would act sensibly.

The hon. Member for Fulham talked about the problem of Germany. The theory that all one needs to do is to transfer money is now on test—between west and east Germany. An economic merger such as that required by European monetary union is now being undertaken by that country.

Germany had the best possible hopes for success. East and west Germany have the same language, similar cultures, a cornucopia of good will, a massive balance of payments surplus, a disciplined industry and a booming manufacturing sector. Yet Germany has great problems which people say will take many years to resolve. The Germans had great hopes when they equalised the east German and west German deutschmarks, but there has been a massive transfer of funds from west to east Germany, which currently proceeds at £50 billion to £60 billion a year.

That sum is enormous. It is about the same as our expenditure in the Department of Social Security. All the dozens of welfare payments and all the retirement pensions come to roughly the amount that the Germans are spending every year in the transfer of resources from west to east Germany in the attempt to equalise the relationship between the two halves. Such a transfer would be inconceivable in any other European situation. Despite the almost unbelievable flow of funds, the results have been disappointing and no one can give a time for ultimate success. In such circumstances, economic convergence seems a long way off. Anyone who pins his hopes on that convergence should consider the lessons of west and east Germany. People should not come to conclusions that the west and east German position does not justify.

I should like there to be fixed exchange rates which were at least variable from time to time. The Bretton Woods system was right. No fixed exchange rates will last for ever, but they can last for a few years. If there is a minor cataclysm at the end of that time in which exchange rates are readjusted, that is far cheaper than the regular purchases of foreign currency which keep all the foreign exchanges throughout the City of London busy handling money and trying to make money on the turn all the time. That is an extremely expensive way in which to operate foreign payments.

The very fine rates that we used to have under the old Bretton Woods system were far better. They did not last for ever, but in this world, nothing does. Such a system provides stability for a reasonable period. If a merger does not succeed within one country—Germany—what is the outlook for countries such as Portugal and Greece if they join a central bank?

When Britain has the presidency, we have a chance to seek a realignment, which is the sensible attitude to take. I fear that the realignment may not be as great as one might wish, but it offers us the opportunity to bring sense to the situation. We cannot continue to have Germany, through having to pay vast sums to east Germany, controlling the whole level of the financial and monetary systems that operate throughout the Community.

Mr. Carrington: The difficulty with a Bretton Woods arrangement is that if it is known that there will be a currency realignment at intervals, whether specified or unspecified, the speculation against that realignment would be massive and would force that realignment either to happen prematurely or to happen to an extent greater than would otherwise be the case. That was why Bretton Woods broke down. That will always be the criticism of such a pegged arrangement.

Mr. Sheldon: That is why the currency alignment, when it takes place, must take account of people's expectations for a long period ahead. That happened in 1949 when there was a 30 per cent. devaluation of the pound, so the currency realignment must meet people's expectations for a long period ahead. Stability for two or three years is then at least possible. There is then a massive saving on the billions of pounds which go across the exchanges every day. We must start to examine that possibility.

The Germans used to say that other countries needed more discipline on wages while they themselves threatened to disrupt the world's trade arrangements by entrenching within their highly prosperous economy their grossly indulged farmers. We like to discipline others in accordance with our prejudices and the countries with the strongest economies are foremost in their disciplinary zeal.

We now see a failure of discipline in a number of areas. We must ensure that we do not over-extend ourselves by introducing fresh disciplines that might limit our opportunities to control our own destiny. Other countries will come to similar conclusions. I want to continue the battle within the Community because we are right. Other countries, especially Spain, Italy, Portugal and Greece—and even France—will come to similar conclusions. On that basis, I look forward to seeing changes coming about.

6.5 pm

Sir Thomas Arnold (Hazel Grove): I congratulate you, Madam Deputy Speaker, on your appointment to the Chair.

It is a pleasure to follow the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon). We are near neighbours and I share his concern about rising unemployment. I should have been happier with the tone of his speech if he had allowed some recognition of the fact that living standards in the north-west have risen in recent years to colour his remarks. If he looked objectively at circumstances in and around Greater Manchester, he would probably agree that, compared with where we were some years ago, the standard of living of most of our constituents has risen.

I accept, of course, that there are problems generated by the recession. We have just fought a general election in which the recession and unemployment played an important part. However, as a result of their spectacular election victory, the Government have considerably more room for manoeuvre than the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) led us to believe from his remarks. Having won an election so decisively, the Government now have a full term of office in which to justify their confident statements in the Queen's Speech.

The right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney sought to make some mischief of the Government's twin objectives. He contrasted our objectives of reducing the Government's share of national income, balancing the budget over the medium term and reducing taxes with the statement in the Queen's Speech about the need to set policy in the medium term by the criterion of convergence within the exchange rate mechanism of the European monetary system.

[Sir Thomas Arnold]

The hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) said that he could not understand why the Conservative party wanted to reduce the share of national income taken by Government spending. The reason is simple. It is that we believe that that is the route to lower taxes, and we fought the general election campaign on that theme. The experience of being in office from 1979 has encouraged us in the belief that in a lightly taxed economy it is possible to obtain non-inflationary growth, to reward initiative and enterprise, and to encourage a real expansion in economic activity and enterprise. With that it is possible, however paradoxical it may appear at first sight, to generate increased revenues. During the 1980s, there were periods when that happened.

I am concerned about some of the problems that my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury faces. He will enjoy my support in some of the decisions that he will have to take. The Chancellor repeated this afternoon that health and education are the priority in public spending, and I support that observation. However, I hope that the Chief Secretary will stick to his declared aim, which he outlined in his speech in the debate on public spending last week, to reduce public spending as a share of national income.

Whatever the present difficulties of my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary, the long-term trends favour us —on one condition, to which I shall come in a moment —because in 1980 the Conservative Government took the courageous and at the time controversial decision to link benefits and pensions to prices rather than earnings. In that sense, we shall find in the years ahead that Government spending as a share of gross domestic product falls compared with that of many of our partners in the European Community.

There are also demographic reasons why we can look forward to a period in which, compared with other countries—in particular, France and Germany—our Government spending represents a smaller share of GDP. That will help the British economy considerably in the latter part of the 1990s. Astonishing though it may sound, Madam Deputy Speaker, provided that the Government stick to their intention to continue down the path of cutting taxes when it is prudent to do so, in the late 1990s we may well have tax rates half those of our continental neighbours and competitors. That will have important—beneficial, I believe—effects on inward investment. It will also make Britain a desirable place for highly professional people to work in and operate from within the wider European framework that we have debated this afternoon.

Whatever the Chief Secretary's current preoccupations and immediate difficulties—he outlined some of them in his speech—the long-term trends are favourable, provided that the Government keep their nerve. It is surely important at the start of a Parliament—what better time? —to have a strategy for public spending, stick to it and not allow public spending decisions to become the subject of immediate political pressures, of which we are all very much aware in the House, simply through the perspective of the annual public spending round. So I hope that the Government will stick to their strategy and not allow themselves to be deflected. I support my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary in his objective.

In saying that I support my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary, I am aware of the strictures which the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney levelled at him. As I understood his argument, the right hon. Gentleman said that if the Government sought to reduce Government spending as a share of national income, to balance the budget over the medium term and to reduce taxes, it would be impossible, certainly difficult, to meet the Maastricht treaty convergence criteria also set out in the Queen's Speech. I should like to make my position clear. I believe that the former should take precedence over the latter.

If the Government had to choose between pursuing the policy of reducing Government spending as a proportion of national income—as well as the other wholly desirable features associated with that policy—and sticking rigidly by the criteria of convergence that the right hon. Gentleman accurately spelt out, they should be prepared to take a political decision and allow some relaxation. Some people may say, "Ah, but Maastricht is a treaty. It is solemn and binding. The British Government cannot act unilaterally." But surely that is to mistake the way in which the Common Market has developed over the years.

Given the circumstances that we witnessed recently in Germany, to which reference has been made several times this afternoon, it is likely that pressures will arise which will produce change. Perhaps there will be a realignment later this year. Indeed, such flexibility is to be welcomed.

We should not make too much of the apparent contradiction in the Queen's Speech to which the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney referred in his eloquent remarks. There is more room for manoeuvre and the Government have greater opportunities than perhaps the right hon. Gentleman is prepared to recognise at first sight.

Mr. Shore: I hope so.

Sir Thomas Arnold: The right hon. Gentleman says that he hopes so. We shall see as the months go by.

The Government come to a new term of office full of hope, with all sorts of opportunities before them. That being the case, I hope that my right hon. Friends in the Treasury will stick by their declared policy and will not deviate from the path which they have set out. It will not be easy. It will be difficult. I want to do everything that I possibly can to support them in their objectives because I believe that that is the way in which we can fulfil the commitments that we gave to the electorate at the general election.

6.14 pm

Mr. Alan Simpson (Nottingham, South): Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, for calling me as the first person to make a maiden speech in this afternoon's debate on the Queen's Speech.

Let me begin by paying several tributes. First, I pay tribute to my immediate predecessor in Nottingham, South. One would be hard pressed to find two people further apart politically, but Members will undoubtedly remember my predecessor as a loyal and faithful servant of the House. What Members may not know is that he was a distinguished rowing referee; often to be seen strutting the banks of the River Trent during competitive events. Those qualities probably made him much better qualified

than me to understand a Government who were often perceived by the general public as going backwards, at great speed, and with their eyes closed.

My second tribute is to my city of Nottingham. It has been my home for some 25 years since I first arrived there as a bright-eyed student. It is a great and kind city. It has a long-held reputation, which is well deserved, as the Queen of the Midlands. Last year it was also voted the place in which the most people around Britain would like to live. This year the people of Nottingham confirmed the good judgment of the rest of the country when they voted to give the city a facelift. In a fit of great electoral enthusiasm and sound common sense, Labour swept the board in Nottingham in the general election. We are now in the proud position that at every level of government, be it district council, county council, Parliament or the European Parliament, Nottingham is well and truly a Labour city. We were only somewhat perplexed to know what was happening in the rest of the country on 9 April.

But Nottingham has its own problems, and it is these problems which force me to speak in opposition to the Queen's Speech. When I examine the measures set out in the Government's programme, I find that they are at best irrelevant and at worst cruelly indifferent to the challenges facing my city and this society. I have served as a county councillor in Nottinghamshire since 1985. I know how deeply, long-term and rising unemployment scars the life of entire communities in my city. Yet there was no mention of unemployment in the Government's programme.

This year, the county council has had to revise the graph that it uses to chart the growth of unemployment because the figures have spilled over the top of the original axis. How tragic and ironic it is that that has coincided with the issue appearing to drop off the bottom of the Government's agenda.

Nottingham has also been riven by the Government's policies on homelessness and bankruptcies. We now have record levels of both in our city. I have to tell this House that not a single family in Nottingham has been saved from eviction by the Government's much-vaunted mortgage rescue scheme. Not a single property has the city council been allowed to buy or buy-back to avert a repossession. The city council has been forced by the Government's dogma to sit on capital receipts of more than £50 million, unable to buy properties or buy back properties to avert repossessions, whilst the repossessed and dispossessed have had to sit out on their belongings.

Unfortunately, the Government's package of proposals offers as little to the homeless in Nottingham as it offers to the jobless. The city has also suffered as much as anywhere from the Government's gimmicks and games-show approach to education funding and reform.

I am a governor of an inner city comprehensive school —a school which I am proud that my children attend—but I have had to watch in sadness as the Government have lavished about £10 million on the white elephant of a city technology college that it will not even allow Her Majesty's inspectorate to issue reports on. Consider what that money could have been used for. Had we been able to share out the money, we would have been able to put it towards huge increases in the quality of education for more than 16,000 secondary pupils in the city of Nottingham rather than the 250 pupils at the city technology college. Had we used the money in a different way, we could have provided a nursery place for every child of three or four years of age in Nottinghamshire. That is the opportunity lost through the games-show approach that the Government have adopted towards education—one special school gets £10 million to spend, and the other 543 schools in the county are allocated £5 million between them.

The question is whether the Government's policies offer a future for all the children in Nottinghamshire or whether they are simply about privileges for a select few.

Although it may be a strange thing to say at this time in the life of a Parliament, I must tell the Government that time is not on their side. Another agenda is being shaped outside this House. It is an agenda that, sooner rather than later, the Government will have to face. Young people I know and with whom I spoke on the streets of Nottingham in the lead-up to the election have a different set of priorities which they wish us to face. They want answers from the House about tackling the worst famine in the history of Africa. They want to know our response to the huge increase in civil and regional conflicts, which are spreading around the globe, where the dictionary definition of a ceasefire has already been rewritten merely as the time it takes to reload or the time it takes to sell replacement arms.

I have to tell those young people, and young people in the Chamber today, that they will find no answers to those questions in the bunker mentality of the Government's approach to aid or arms control, or in the pernicious return of the Asylum Bill. There will be no future for my children or for anyone else's in a society riven by the extremes of wealth and poverty. In the Government's programme they will find only the policies of an Administration that closes its doors and turns its back on those increasingly trapped in fear, famine and civil war.

Those young people also ask how we may halt the destruction of the planet—so that they may inherit a future rather than a funeral. They will find no reference whatsoever to this in the Government's programme. That enormous challenge is being ducked.

People of all ages are asking what plans we have to reclaim the links with that generation of Thatcher's children who have become lost—those who were told to fend for themselves and that they were not worth decent training. As in the past, the Government's response is one of lamentable silence.

If there are lessons to be learnt from the tragic events of the Los Angeles riots, surely one lesson must be this: that the self-indulgence and complacency of the rich in Beverly Hills was as much a part of the riots as the looting and shooting amongst the poor. I see no future for this country if we ignore the lessons of those riots. I see no future for our children if we consign them to a society riven by the shabby prejudices of race, gender, age or religion.

When I rise in the House to tackle such questions, I shall seek to continue to press the Government on the issues that are already being shaped by a generation outside who will lose patience with the House if we do not address their priorities. I shall seek to do so with a degree of humour, and with courtesy, but reinforced by the words of advice from the late President Truman, who said:

"Never give them hell—just tell them the truth and they think it's hell."

The lives and livelihoods of my constituents in Nottingham, South are of such importance that anything less than that commitment would be quite remiss of me. I pledge that commitment to the House now and to my constituents throughout my period in this House.

6.25 pm

Mr. James Couchman (Gillingham): I join my hon. Friend the Member for Hazel Grove (Sir T. Arnold) in congratulating you, Madam Deputy Speaker, on your arrival in the Chair to oversee our proceedings. I add my congratulations to the new Member for Nottingham, South (Mr. Simpson) who has just spoken elegantly and with a great passion about his constituents and about affairs beyond these shores. His predecessor was a contemporary of mine and a good friend and I shall miss him, as will many of us on these Benches. We hope that the hon. Member for Nottingham, South will enjoy fighting him at the next election and we shall hope to welcome him back here then.

We shall listen to the words of the hon. Member for Nottingham, South in a slightly less restrained manner, I suspect, on the next occasion that he rises to speak, for there are conventions about how contentious one should be in one's maiden speech. Although I recognise that he gave us the obligatory Cook's tour of Nottingham, he also gave us a good deal of politics of a contentious nature and we shall certainly taken him to task next time.

We have heard a number of interesting contributions to the first important debate on the economy in this new Parliament. I shall not follow the lines of argument, which were more ably pursued by others, about European monetary union, the exchange rate mechanism and everything that will affect us during the coming years, through the Maastricht agreement and subsequent agreements within Europe.

As evidence of economic recovery gathers pace, it might be helpful to offer a perspective from someone who is still running a small family business in London, in a sector which was late into recession and which will probably be late into recovery. I declare my interest and my involvement in business to comply with our conventions and to establish credentials which are by no means common among Members of Parliament.

This week, we have received news of a Confederation of British Industry survey which suggests that the outlook for small firms is the most encouraging for two years, in terms both of the economy in general and of their own performance. After four months at the beginning of the year still firmly stuck in recession, with output and demand falling, the general election has proved to be something of a watershed, and the outlook is now a sharp increase in output and a sharp fall in unemployment.

That good news reflects a growth in confidence, the key ingredient which was lacking in the run-up to the general election. Although the successive half-point cuts in interest rates helped to ease the overhead costs of business during the past 12 months, without a return of confidence there could be no hope of increasing business turnover, thereby easing the rise in unemployment. It was a vicious circle because the fear of unemployment was itself a serious brake on the recovery of consumer activity.

According to figures published yesterday, during the first quarter of this year, and especially in March—when the fear of a possible Labour Government was greatest—consumers paid off £118 million of debts. People were so worried by the possibility of a predatory Labour Government that the debt total fell. I, for one, would not scoff at their worry. They had plenty of cause for concern, especially those people in the lower to medium income brackets.

The increase in optimism among small firms that was reflected in the CBI survey is good news, although it should not be overestimated: life out there for someone running a small company, as I am, is still very tough indeed. The banks—which are trying to recover from the results of their monumental misjudgments in relation to mega-borrowers such as Maxwell, Polly Peck, Brent Walker, Olympia and York and other major property developers—are very twitchy.

It is ironic that someone seeking to borrow a few thousand pounds will be trussed up like a Christmas turkey with mortgage charges, debentures, personal guarantees and anything else on which the banks can lay their hands, whereas if someone like their great socialist tycoon Maxwell wants a few hundred million, the banks will pay with almost no evidence of security. I believe that small and medium-sized businesses are paying the price for the misjudgments of the banks in relation to loans to the outfits that I have named.

At this point, let me make the first of my pleas to Ministers. If recovery is to come, it is essential that the banks play their part. While cash flow is still weak, orders and demand will need to be financed, probably by further loans. Ministers at the Treasury and the Department of Trade and Industry must use their influence to encourage the banks not to pull the plug on potentially sound and mature businesses that are fighting to survive the effects of the past two disastrous years. Such companies are the backbone of British business, and their demise would leave gaps that could not easily be filled. That can only make recovery more difficult.

My second plea is for Ministers to work without ceasing to take bureaucracy off the back of business. When I was in Australia last year on a Commonwealth Parliamentary Association visit, I was told about a brave entrepreneur who decided to set up a small business operating a flying-boat service from Melbourne through Sydney to Brisbane. His mistake, or misfortune, lay in the fact that his proposed business involved land, sea and air in three states, with three state administrations—not to mention the federal authorities.

It transpired that, to operate what had seemed to be quite a simple service, that entrepreneur would need 189 separate licences—each involving a more or less difficult application form to be approved by at least one capricious official, and each involving a fee. There can be no better turn-off for the enterprising aspirant business man than that sort of burgeoning bureaucracy. As a result, sadly, there is now no small flying-boat service up the east coast of Australia.

It is easy to suggest that the experience of grossly over-governed Australia could not be repeated here, but we ignore that lesson at our peril. As we sit in the House of Commons—few of us with coalface experience of business—passing shelfyard after shelfyard of legislation with the very best of intent, we have hardly an inkling of the way in which officialdom, with its routines and procedures, will interpret our laws and implement our policies. Recent examples of well-meaning laws that we have passed, which will have massive effects on many businesses, include the Food Safety Act 1990 and the Environmental Protection Act 1989, both of which satisfy the wildest dreams of the ambitious bureaucrat.

The Sunday Times has lately highlighted the recent tendency of Customs and Excise and the Inland Revenue audit group to become very aggressive, even in the most

routine monitoring of payments by business. It seems that those two organisations are going on fishing trips. *The Sunday Times* is right to bring to light some of the very questionable practices of inspectors: its evidence accords with my recent experience of such audits. Fighting off outrageous and unsubstantiated claims from the Revenue can take enormous amounts of executive time, and it can cost a substantial sum in fees paid to a company's accountants to bring about a withdrawal of the Revenue's claims.

What is more, the Revenue has unlimited funds with which to take any case that it wishes to dispute to the highest courts in the land. That will break or cripple almost every small or medium-sized business that becomes involved.

It seems to me that the two great tax-gathering agencies of Government have it within their powers to destroy business, or to help and guide confused business men through the maze of shifting rules and regulations that emanate from our Finance Acts. In the interests of economic recovery, my right hon. and hon. Friends in the Treasury should use their considerable influence to persuade the Inland Revenue and Customs and Excise to use their formidable powers positively, rather than to destroy the companies that will make recovery possible. They need to cherish small and medium-sized companies, which offer the best chance of creating new jobs and reducing unemployment—as they did throughout the 1980s.

Many of the principals of those small companies have applied their craft skills, and either a redundancy payment or borrowed money, to building new businesses. They are terrified of the multitude of regulations that flow from the Palace of Westminster, the Departments in Whitehall, county hall and the municipal buildings. They have to spend far too much of their time satisfying the whims of officialdom, to the detriment of their businesses' prosperity.

At this point, I shall indulge myself in a short anecdote about the business statistics office—just one of a myriad officialdoms that afflict small business. I fill in forms about capital spending for the office each quarter, but recently it has sent me forms about revenue spending. While I was away fighting the general election campaign, the co-director of my small business was telephoned by the business statistics office, which wanted to know where the latest return had got to. "Ah," said my co-director. "the person who usually fills those in is away fighting the general election campaign", and he explained the circumstances.

The chap on the other end of the telephone line said, "Well, fill in what you think you may have taken. The figures do not really matter anyway." If that was indeed the Government's official business statistics office speaking, it is a piece of officialdom that can be taken off our backs straight away. I beg my right hon. and hon. Friends in the Government to be especially mindful, at the outset of the new Parliament, of the burden that will fall on business as a result of their legislation, and to seek to minimise that burden. Through such action, they will make a real contribution to the recovery in which small and medium-sized companies seek to play their part.

I was encouraged by the commitment made by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor this afternoon to reducing the bureaucratic burden. I shall keep him up to it.

6.37 pm

Mr. James Molyneaux (Lagan Valley): I am sometimes absent from the House because of what used to be known as the group talks, now known as the Stormont talks. I have to attend three days a week, and I therefore hope that you will forgive me, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for not congratulating you earlier on your elevation. You and I have been near neighbours geographically for a long time, separated only by a narrow strip of Gangway. I think that I can promise you—perhaps rashly—that my colleagues and I will try not to give you too much trouble.

I congratulate the hon. Member for Nottingham, South (Mr. Simpson) on a forceful and sincere speech. At Question Time today, he occupied my seat at the end of the Bench. I made no attempt to dislodge him, because I have high hopes of converting him and enlisting him in my party —and, even after hearing the speech that he made this evening, I have not given up hope entirely. I know that the Chief Whip may not approve, but perhaps we can fight a duel when it comes to the point.

The hon. Member for Gillingham (Mr. Couchman) made a special plea to the Government in defence of the business community, and small businesses in particular. I am sure that the Financial Secretary to the Treasury will convey his views forcefully and accurately to the Chief Secretary, who may hold the key to many of the answers. We shall depend on the Treasury, which is at the receiving end of all the advice that we are giving today, to do what it can to ease the burden of bureaucracy endured by businesses great and small. That is one handicap that they can do without in these times.

The number of Ministers on the Treasury Bench has thinned since the beginning of the debate. Nevertheless, there are a couple of matters that I wish to raise with the Financial Secretary. I hope that he will not resent any words of advice that I give him and that he will be able, in a reciprocal gesture, to answer my brief questions. I hope that my opening words will offer a grain of comfort to him and his colleagues, because in drafting our party manifesto for the election we took a calculated risk when we included the following:

> "We believe that our advocacy of a general policy of prudent and useful expenditure tailored to meet the special needs of each region of the United Kingdom is the right course of action for a government which desires to keep the Union intact."

Our election result vindicated that consistent stance on sound money, and the voters of Northern Ireland proved that election bribes are not a decisive factor in winning elections.

The intelligence of voters should not be underestimated. They have the ability to spot dishonesty from far off. A prudent Government, particularly one which has been elected for the fourth time, should ensure that the nation's problems are put squarely before the public. The Government have everything to gain from trusting the public and the judgment of the people. For example, in the mid-1980s, when it became clear that something would have to be done about the rating system, the Government should have put the basic choices clearly before the public. Once convinced that drastic measures were required, it is true that there may not have been agreement on any one option, but there would have been a far greater acceptance of the resulting legislation.

In 1980-81, the Thatcher Government, as it has been called in the debate, made a virtue out of reducing

[Mr. James Molyneaux]

expenditure to such an extent that they were blamed for making savage cuts—an accusation which became a millstone round the Government's neck for the entire decade. I never quite understood why the then Ministers refused to explain that they were merely restraining increases in the rate of expenditure. In that way, they would have avoided antagonising nearly every sectional interest and every profession.

I do not think that my words are jarring greatly on the Financial Secretary because, in those days, he probably shared my views, and he still may. The Queen's Speech made a modest and even timid reference to good housekeeping when it stated that the Government would maintain firm control of public spending with the aim of keeping its share of the national income on a downward trend over time. If the Government are determined to do just that, they need to explain, and to continue to explain, just why it is necessary to adhere resolutely to that course.

Explanations will be made even more necessary by unpredicable events in Europe and alterations in the European Community's structures. Many of those foreshadowed changes will outdate whole slabs of the Maastricht treaty, and in next week's debate on that treaty the House would be wise to study its implications for Britain by the end of the century. Certainly it would be impossible to comply with the delusions and whims of Jacques Delors and find ourselves deprived of freedom of action in regard to Treasury matters—perhaps the most important—and many other internal policies.

Those on the Treasury Bench would be wise to heed the wise words of the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore), who said that the nation had been denied the opportunity to express a view on Europe. During the election campaign, I was haunted by the suspicion that there was a three-party conspiracy of silence which prevented that matter from being debated seriously. Consequently, given those circumstances, the British electorate had no clear method to express a view on a matter that has important implications for their future.

The right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon) warned us about the knock-on effects of German reunification, which are just beginning to make an impact. I hope that Her Majesty's Government would not be so foolish as to ignore the probability that the situation in Germany will deteriorate still further with consequent effects on us. Treasury calculations could be seriously upset, and I am sure that the Financial Secretary will have taken careful note of what the right hon. Gentleman said.

I hope that in the very near future the Treasury will resolve what appears to be a contradiction over the estimated costs of devolution. Some Ministers have been warning the Scots that they would have to bear what amounted to double taxation for the privilege of enjoying some control over their own affairs. The component parts of the United Kingdom need to know—and urgently—exactly what that cost will be. Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are all candidates for decentralised powers. Their taxpayers need to know, within weeks, just how great the additional financial burden will be because discussions on the process of decentralisation are already under way in the component parts of the United Kingdom, and, since the general election, in little discussion circles in the Palace of Westminster. That is something that we cannot ignore.

The financial contradiction may be a reflection of the constitutional contradiction, which certainly existed in the minds of several Ministers, who were in the habit of declaring that they would not contemplate devolution for Scotland and Wales. However, at the same time, they were making haste to impose devolution on Northern Ireland. That contradiction existed, at least, until the final week of the election campaign, when the Prime Minister—I think quite rightly—opened up the debate on the integrity of the United Kingdom. He declared:

> "I will entertain no constitutional changes that will weaken the United Kingdom".

Two days later, he added:

> "there is no issue more crucial at this election than the defence of the unity of our United Kingdom."

It was natural that in the debate on the Loyal Address the Prime Minister should refer to the four corners of the United Kingdom and recognise that, while the individuality of all parts of the United Kingdom should be respected,

> "the Union itself is not negotiable".—[*Official Report*, 6 May 1992; Vol. 207, c. 67.]

The Prime Minister's thinking is in line with my own humble contribution to our party manifesto, which predicted that in the new Parliament there would be delivered a pattern of governance common to every part of the kingdom.

The House will know that the three Northern Ireland parties represented in the House are currently engaged in discussions about a practical level of devolution for our part of the kingdom. We trust that there will be an assurance from the Treasury that, if we are lucky, we will not be surcharged for that privilege. At the beginning of those talks, we bound ourselves to the maintenance of confidentiality. However, I think that the other two parties' representatives would allow me to say that we have in the ranks of those delegations, which total about 40, around the Stormont table the talent and ability to achieve my long-held personal aim of designing a structure which will draw together the various strands in Northern Ireland, and gradually integrate them into one Ulster community at peace with itself, and working as an equal partner with the other three countries in the United Kingdom which the Prime Minister is determined to maintain. I am sure that the Treasury Bench and the Prime Minister will have our full support in that high endeavour and that we shall register that support in the Lobby tonight.

6.50 pm

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): May I join my hon. Friends who have congratulated you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on your election. It is a tribute to you and your fellow occupants of the Speaker's Chair that your election has given pleasure to hon. Members on both sides of the House.

I also join my hon. Friends in congratulating the hon. Member for Nottingham, South (Mr. Simpson) on his maiden speech which, like all too many maiden speeches so far in this Parliament, was conspicuously controversial. I join the hon. Gentleman in the tribute that he paid to Martin Brandon-Bravo, who was well liked throughout the House and regarded as a concerned, conscientious, loyal and hard-working Member.

The right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux) asked that the costs of devolution should be quickly defined. However, it is not the Government but the Opposition who are proposing a tax-raising assembly for the Scottish people. Surely is it up to the Labour party to say what additional taxes that would impose on the people of Scotland.

I wish to refer to various paragraphs in the Gracious Speech, the most important of which relates to a subject that was discussed in great detail yesterday—education. If the Government get the education system right, fewer other problems will face our country. I commend the paragraph that begins:

"My Government will . . . raise standards at all levels of education".

I am privileged to represent the London borough of Barnet, which has the best education results of any local authority in the country. One of the reasons for that is the great diversity and choice of schools. In my constituency, the electorate can choose to send their children to two voluntary-aided high schools, a voluntary-aided grammar school or two comprehensive schools. That wide variety of choice is one reason why the London borough of Barnet has achieved such good results.

Mr. Roy Beggs (Antrim, East): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that all children get off to a good start in their education if they attend nursery school? What nursery provision exists in his constituency? We in Northern Ireland have had excellent results at O and A-level, but many young people do less well partly because we have the lowest level of nursery provision in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Marshall: I am glad that the hon. Gentleman has given me an opportunity to point out that, under this Government, nursery school provision has increased in the London borough of Barnet. Only recently we saw the opening of the new St. Agnes Catholic school with nursery provision for 48 children. I hope that, despite the denominational nature of that education, the hon. Gentleman will welcome it.

I cannot for the life of me understand the opposition of some hon. Members to grant-maintained schools. I am fortunate that one of the first grant-maintained schools in the country is Hendon school in my constituency. I have visited the school on many occasions and the high morale within the school is conspicuous. One of the first times that I visited that school was in the company of the current Secretary of State for Transport when he was Secretary of State for Education and Science. During that visit one of the teachers approached him and said, "Mr. MacGregor, I have a confession to make: I am a member of the Labour party." I wondered what would be said next. He then said, "I think that I should tell you that the best thing that has happened to this school is its becoming a grant-maintained school."

More recently, the former Prime Minister, Mrs. Thatcher, visited the school during the general election campaign. In that visit one of the teachers approached her and said, "Thank you very much, Mrs. Thatcher, for giving us the opportunity to show that we can run this school and provide a better school than we had before."

The proof of that comes from the attitude of the parents in Barnet to Hendon school. When it was run by the local authority, some 110 pupils applied to go there. This year, the number of applicants was 386. The school has been able to spend much more money on books and teaching aids and provides much better school lunches than when it was part of the local authority system.

If we look at our education system, we find that those schools that have become grant maintained are popular and successful. The grant-maintained experiment will do a great service for education. I hope that we shall never believe that higher expenditure on education automatically leads to better results. Those of us who represent London constituencies remember the record of the unlamented Inner London Education Authority, which regularly spent much more money than the London borough of Barnet and regularly had some of the worst results in the country.

We should congratulate the Government not only on changing the school system but on their policies in respect of further and higher education. Recently in my constituency we have seen many new signs relating to the new university of Middlesex, which is of the highest calibre. More students from other EC countries go there than to any other university in the United Kingdom. Far more go there than to the universities of Cambridge and Oxford.

I welcome the fact that the Gracious Speech states that the Government are committed to pursuing

"vigorously their programme of privatisation".

I welcome particularly the privatisation of British Coal. Some hon. Members—we have heard them in this debate —say that privatisation is flogging off the family silver. If that is the case with British Coal, it is pretty tarnished family silver. I know of your interest, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in the industry, but I must point out that British Coal has put a massive burden on the taxpayer, costing many billions of pounds that could have been spent more productively. It has been a burden not only on the taxpayer but on the consumer, because the electricity industry has been encouraged to buy its coal from British Coal rather than on the world market. Who has paid for that? Those who have paid for higher electricity prices have been the pensioners, the consumers of coal and the energy-intensive industries. The denationalisation of British Coal will lead to a good deal for the consumer and those who work in energy-intensive industries. They can look forward to an improvement in their job opportunities as a result of its denationalisation. The hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) said that British Coal was a monopoly. Is he not aware that it will face competition from imports, the gas industry and oil?

Some hon. Members doubt the wisdom of privatisation. There may even be one or two Opposition Members who have still not learned the facts of economic life. When we look at the record of the privatised industries, the first thing we notice is that there has been a huge increase in the productivity of the employees.

Dr. Lewis Moonie (Kirkcaldy): What about prices?

Mr. Marshall: The hon. Gentleman should be better informed. He knows that prices charged by the privatised industries have risen by much less than the rate of inflation. As a Labour Front-Bench spokesman, the hon. Gentleman should know that the Office of Gas Supply has been more effective in controlling British Gas than any Cabinet Minister. The hon. Gentleman should realise that the Office of Telecommunications has succeeded in keeping the prices charged by British Telecom lower than they would have been if the industry had stayed in the state

[Mr. Marshall]

sector. The hon. Member for Kirkcaldy (Dr. Moonie) should know that the Office of Electricity Regulation would be more successful in controlling electricity prices than any Cabinet Minister. The regulator of the water industry will be equally successful in controlling water prices. The hon. Member for Kirkcaldy should also know that one of the characteristics of privatised industries has been a massive increase in investment in those industries because they are tapping the private market rather than the taxpayer.

Do hon. Members think that Cable and Wireless, if it had stayed in the public sector, would have been encouraged to compete with British Telecom? Would it have been given taxpayers' money to invest in a competitive telephone system? Of course not. Would British Telecom be spending what it is spending today on new investment if it was still in the public sector? Of course it would not. The hon. Member for Kirkcaldy should know that the reason for the massive increase in investment by the privatised industries is that they are now in the private sector, no longer subject to the constraints of the Treasury and the public sector.

I welcome the paragraph in the Gracious Speech which reads:

"My Government will encourage Community agreements with central and eastern Europe".

I have had the privilege of visiting Romania, Czechoslovakia and Poland. In all those countries one is struck by the fact that, under communism, industry was vastly overmanned—a characteristic of which the Labour party probably approves—underinvested and overdependent on fellow countries of the Council of Mutual Economic Assistance for their markets. Industries were oversubsidised and there was environmental pollution.

The result of the overthrow of communism has led to huge price increases, massive reductions in output and large increases in unemployment. That economic instability will lead to political instability unless we in the west take action to help those countries. In Romania, many Securitate officials are still in post, and there has already been an outbreak of anti-Semitism.

I welcome the comments in the Gracious Speech that relate to the Maastricht settlement. I will not be allowed to speak next week as I am speaking this week, so I hope that you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, will not object if I say one or two words about that agreement.

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): Perhaps the Government will have to work to make up the numbers next week as well.

Mr. Marshall: I suspect that there will be plenty of volunteers to speak next week. No doubt there will be some from the Carlton club.

Any community either has to develop and expand or it decays. There can be no such thing as a static European Community. I know that some hon. Members wish that we had never joined, but they should recognise the reality. We have been a member of the Community for more than 19 years, and the referendum in 1975 gave a massive endorsement of our membership of the Community. The principle of our membership has been long accepted. Even the Labour party has accepted it in the past five or six years.

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Stephen Dorrell): On and off.

Mr. Marshall: As my hon. Friend says, on and off.

There are some mean-minded and petty hon. Members and members of the general public who do not want Britain to make a success of its membership of the Community, but that is folly. Maastricht was a great success for this country as the exemption of Britain from the social chapter will be beneficial to inward investment and job creation. I do not understand how some hon. Members can say that they want to impose the social chapter on Britain when it will lead to the unemployment of their constituents. It might salve their social conscience, but I do not want to salve my social conscience at the expense of the unemployment of my constituents.

The Gracious Speech also stated:

"Other measures will be laid before you."

I hope that one such measure will relate to Sunday trading. The anomalies of the Sunday trading law are spoken of all too frequently. It is possible to go to a football match, a tennis match at Wimbledon or a cricket match, but it is illegal to rent out a sporting video on a Sunday. It is possible to sell the *News of the World*, but not a book. It is possible to sell gin legally, but not teabags. Such nonsense is defended by those who support the Sunday trading laws. A law that is frequently broken and rarely enforced is absolute nonsense. The law is frequently broken by supermarkets, corner shops and even, dare I say it, cathedral shops. It has brought the rule of law into disrepute.

Who opposes changes in the law? The first opponent is the Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers, one of the least representative trade unions in the country. One shop worker in 10 is a member of USDAW. Another group of opponents is the "Keep Sunday Special" brigade.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): It is possible to amend some of the anomalies to which my hon. Friend refers without ripping Sunday apart. It is possible to keep Sunday special and, at the same time, get rid of some of that nonsense.

Mr. Marshall: I quite agree that we can reform the law and not rip Sunday apart. I advise my hon. Friend the Member for Lancaster (Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman) to go to Scotland. That country has maintained a special Sunday and deregulated Sunday trading. In Scotland, shops can open at any time. Many of them choose not to do so, and more people go to church in Scotland than do so in England. My hon. Friend is right: a similar policy could be adopted in England, where we could have a special Sunday and deregulated trading. More people go to supermarkets on a Sunday than to the Church of England—an important point that the Treasury should consider.

The Gracious Speech provides for the prosperity of our country, the foundation of the success of our country in the 1990s, and the success of the Government in the election in 1996. I commend it to the House.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): May I remind the House that Madam Speaker put a time limit on speeches made between 7 and 9 pm. I hope that it will not be necessary for me to intervene before hon. Members conclude their speeches.

7.8 pm

Mr. Michael Connarty (Falkirk, East): I am grateful to be called in this, the first major debate of the new Parliament, and congratulate you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on your appointment.

I rise to speak with some trepidation, first, as I am aware that my speaking style may not transcribe well into the record of the House, and, secondly, as I am not likely to be oily enough to match the hon. Member for Gedling (Mr. Mitchell) who seconded the motion on the Loyal Address last week. I am more known to my Scots colleagues for my spiky style. Having seen the old photograph shown by the Serjeant at Arms, I think it may take some time to live down that spiky reputation.

My most important concern as the new hon. Member for Falkirk, East is to follow in the footsteps of the well-liked and respected Harry Ewing. Harry was liked and loved by his former constituents, and respected in the House for his timely and telling interventions. He left me with an additional burden as, in a debate on Sunday trading during the last Session, he offered to do the Speaker's shopping in Scotland on Sundays. I wonder whether Madam Speaker will expect me to include her shopping in my weekend duties. It would be in keeping with the spirit of the age and would help her to prepare for her weekday duties, but I hope that I may resile the contract if I pledge to attempt to be as pleasant in nature and as telling in my interventions as my predecessor.

Harry Ewing was also known for his competence in Scottish ministerial posts and for his dedication to working people, in addition to his pleasant nature. I shall be honoured to try to do as well as he in all things. In his maiden speech as the Member for the then Stirling and Falkirk Burghs in October 1971, Harry Ewing expressed concern that Scotland would become a peripheral region of Europe. Given the Government's approach to the social chapter of the Maastricht treaty, it appears that Scotland is about to become a semi-detached peripheral region of Europe.

Before reorganisation, parts of Falkirk, East were in the constituencies of Clackmannan, East Stirlingshire and West Lothian. My hon. Friends the Members for Clackmannan (Mr. O'Neill) and for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) are held in high regard by their former constituents, which is evidence of the excellent way in which they served them in the past.

The town of Grangemouth is at the centre of Falkirk, East and has been noted for some time as a petrochemical town, boasting substantial production facilities for BP Oil, BP Chemicals, ICI, General-Electric Plastics, and Rhom and Haas (Scotland). My constituents are pleased at the commitment to investment by those companies, notably the £600 million investment by BP Chemicals in an ethylene cracker plant, the process technology labs of ICI and the Rhom and Haas plant upgrade. However, all is not what it once was. Harry Ewing noted the vast expansion of Grangemouth in 1971, but in 1971, when speaking about new employment, he said that the position was rapidly changing. I say without criticism of local management in Grangemouth that, in 1991-92, more than 1,000 job losses were announced in the town. Some 300 jobs have gone at the BP refinery, 250 have gone at ICI and 200 more redundancies are being sought. In addition, there were major job losses in the timber yards, which were made much of in 1971 by my predecessor.

Let us look particularly at ICI. ICI was threatened by Hanson in a way that no other European country would allow. The Government's policies afford no protection to British companies from the smash-and-grab merchants, or should I call them grab-and-smash merchants, of international finance. ICI is now forced to break with its past policy of sharing its prosperity with all those who helped the company grow over decades. That has dire consequences for those who lose their jobs and for job prospects in my constituency. It has all been done for the sake of the share price, so that Hanson can sell them off and, hopefully, take "clear-off" money. I am told that the City has an unparliamentary phrase for that sort of thing, but I shall not use it.

Another departure at ICI that concerns the people of Falkirk, East is the closure of the anthraquinone production plant at Grangemouth. The chemical is the base green product for many dyes. There were concerns about the need to upgrade the plant to reduce airborne emissions, but the decision to build a production plant in India and ship the anthraquinone to the United Kingdom to raise it to the required European standard has left a sour taste in the mouths of local people. It also raises for the Government the question of what they will do to assist the reduction and acceptable disposal of chemical industry effluents. Will they guarantee for local government strong powers to enforce standards for all effluent disposal as a token of their commitment to the environment?

Grangemouth is also known as a port handling more than 40,000 containers per annum, plus dry cargo. The port is also known for the way it was privatised with undue haste just before the general election. The Government's credibility over that escapade is in tatters. I am informed that the Forth ports authority, a trust set up to look after a public asset, fixed up a deal with the Government that resulted in those same trustees getting a majority of the shares in the privatised Forth Ports company. The Government get a kick-back of a substantial percentage of any future asset sales to add to the original sale money.

Some matters continue to cause concern—for instance, that the dock land covered by the recently-granted simplified planning zone will not be developed for commerce but sold for housing and quick profit. There are also concerns at the connection between the pricing policy of the Forth Ports company, which appears to be driving dry cargo to other ports, and the disgusting but not surprising demand for redundancies of dockers, despite what I understand was a £9 million profit declared by Forth Ports on assets of £30 million.

The constituency also boasts the former mining villages of east Stirlingshire, which combine with the vastly expanded commuter village of Polmont and the community of Laurieston on the edge of Falkirk to form the area called the Braes. I detail the geography of this community of 20,000 plus to underline the Government's failure to provide the resources for even one secondary school. Children are forced to travel by weird and wonderful routes from all irts and pirts to the nearby town of Falkirk in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Falkirk, West (Mr. Canavan).

Viewed together with the need for increased nursery and primary school capacity, that is a major deficiency in encouraging the building of a community identity and in assisting in a rebirth of pride and endeavour in those once proud communities, many of which have been ship-wrecked by the tides of economic change. I urge the

[Mr. Michael Connarty]

Government not to continue with the discouraging line set by the previous Minister with responsibility for Scottish education but to release the necessary resources to Central regional council and guarantee that they will not centralise the control of education at the Scottish Office.

I link the most easterly and the most northerly communities in the constituency in a plea for the needs of the health service. Borrowstouness, better known as Bo'ness, in the east is a former whaling port and is still an iron foundry town. Until the 1980s, it had a proud mining tradition. The pride of Bo'ness Kinneil's colliers lives on, but Bo'ness has become mainly a commuter town of 15,000 people. It has a heritage centre and the Scottish Steam Railway Preservation Society. But modern Bo'ness does not have a single NHS bed for the long-term care of elderly male patients. I stress the word patients. There are only 24 female beds in Bo'ness hospital. In the spring 1990 issue of the "Forth Valley Health Board News", the hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth), as part of a clear propaganda exercise, wrote:

"To underline our commitment to the elderly and disabled we will spend £5·6 million on 150 new beds at Lochgreen hospital"

in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Falkirk, West

"and Bo'ness hospital."

I have a letter from the health board secretary, saying that work would start in 1992-93 but nothing has happened. I have now been told by the health board secretary that work is in the programme for 1994-95.

I have a well-documented consequence of this lack of facilities. A constituent who is in her seventies must travel daily to Falkirk to the male ward of the Falkirk infirmary in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Falkirk, West. She undertakes an arduous bus journey of five miles and a long walk to visit her husband who suffered a stroke while undergoing an operation two years ago. If the health board and the former Scottish health Minister had kept their promise, that woman would be looking forward to her husband returning to his home town within a year. The health board has suggested that the family might try to get a place at a Bo'ness nursing home. I have it on the authority of local consultants that that solution is most favoured by the Conservative chairman of the local health board.

The family checked with local nursing homes and found that they can have a place at £320 a week, of which £260 will be provided by social security and the gentleman's pensions. Therefore, the family must find £60 a week. The wife has said, "No. Why should I pay for care that I and my husband have already paid taxes for all our lives?" She says that the Government will never convince her that they are not privatising health care.

Why is Forth Valley health board not willing to pay for a nursing home place? The woman's husband is still a patient—a word which I stressed earlier—and it is the Government's failure and the Minister's broken promise that are causing the difficulty. I hope that the Government will confirm that they will not allow Forth Valley health board to withdraw from its commitment to provide additional beds at Bo'ness hospital. I urge the Government to consider arrangements to ensure that some of the care and boarding costs are covered by the health board contributions when patients are transferred from hospitals to private nursing homes.

I should like to say much more to the Government—a Government who caused so much harm in the 1980s. They must be reminded that they shaved in at the election and that only 1,700 votes in 11 constituencies made the Conservatives the largest party. In view of that, I hope that the Government will moderate their ideology. In future speeches, I shall return unstintingly to the task of representing the needs and interests of all the people of Falkirk, East throughout this Parliament.

7.18 pm

Mr. Anthony Coombs (Wyre Forest): I congratulate the hon. Members for Falkirk, East (Mr. Connarty) and for Nottingham, South (Mr. Simpson) on their excellent maiden speeches. I also congratulate in advance the large number of hon. Members who will later make their maiden speeches. I am sure that they will all grace the House over the next four of five years.

Many of the issues raised in the debate were adequately aired in the general election debate. The decisive vote in favour of the Conservative party was due to three basic factors, but especially to our economic policies. The first was that the British people did not feel that a party that was still committed, through clause IV, to the ownership of the common means of production and exchange was the kind of party that could be adequately left in charge of a mixed enterprise economy. Secondly, a party that saw taxation primarily in terms of the redistribution of wealth was unlikely to improve incentives. Thirdly, a party that saw the rich as people earning more than £21,000 a year was unlikely to push forward a large increase in the prosperity of the individual.

As to financial rectitude, here was the Labour party with £38,000 million worth of policies and only £4,000 million worth of revenue to fund them. Its difficulty in convincing the country on its attitude to inflation was demonstrated by the following two quotes. The first is from the Leader of the Opposition in 1990, when he said to the Welsh Labour party conference:

"Inflation must be brought down by a combination of restrictions on credit, financial discipline and—yes—interest rates too."

The second comes from the right hon and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith), who said in 1991, less than a year later:

"We will not be using interest rates for . . . controlling demand."

Two of the most senior members of the Labour party were unable to decide on the role that interest rates should play in the control of inflation.

More positively, the British people showed that, despite the world recession, which was generally recognised, the British economy had, over the 1980s, been transformed in terms of manufacturing productivity, growth, exports and the ability of management to manage. It is small wonder that the director general of the CBI welcomed the election result by saying that it was

"the best possible result for British business of all the possible outcomes of the general election."

In the short time since the election, that judgment by the British people has been vindicated. The stock market has risen by 10 per cent., and Dun and Bradstreet has shown that industrial confidence among business men has gone up from a positive 7 per cent. to a positive 25 per cent.

The CBI and the chambers of commerce tell the same tale about industrial confidence. Even the housing market is starting to show some signs of improvement. I am told that in my constituency, the transport of rolled steel has moved up significantly over the past month, and that is a harbinger of the potential general growth of the economy. The pound has strengthened considerably against the deutschmark and, to a certain extent, against the dollar, despite the reduction in interest rates. In my constituency, unemployment has started to fall slightly.

The Government's economic policy has brought about all these improvements. First of all, the political climate is much more favourable to investors than it is in France, Italy or Germany. Secondly, international investors are convinced that we shall ensure that the battle against inflation will be won, and it is significant that yesterday's announcement showed that the factory gate prices to April rose by only 3·8 per cent., which is the best figure for four years. The money supply growth, in both the narrow and broad range, is well within target. Thirdly, the Government have reinforced their commitment to the ERM within the present parities, and that is a significant reason why the credibility of the pound has been maintained.

It is interesting that, despite the fact that the relative differential of interest rates between the pound and the deutschmark has dropped from 5 to 0·5 per cent., the pound has strengthened against the deutschmark. Domestic investors are convinced that the Government will continue their low-taxation, high-incentive policies, which have given the country the lowest corporate tax rate in Europe.

The right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) said that we would be shackled to the deutschmark in terms of our interest rate policy. In fact, we now have the opportunity to break free from it. For the first time in more than 20 years, we have lower interest rates than Germany. There are two reasons for that. The first is financial stability. Retail prices have increased by 2·1 per cent. in the United Kingdom over the past three months whereas in Germany they have increased by 4·7 per cent. Our money supply, on a broad level, is much more under control than that in Germany—we had a 5·6 per cent. increase over last year, compared with 7 per cent. there. Although we realise, as my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary has said, that we have demands on our public expenditure budget, they pale into insignificance against the 70 billion deutschmarks that the Germans have to pump into the east of Germany every year. Our political situation is more stable, particularly given the instability of the coalition Government.

All that gives us the opportunity to lower real interest rates and therefore nominal ones in the way that the Germans cannot. However, we cannot afford—this is crucial—any relaxation in monetary or fiscal policy.

Secondly, irrespective of what the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney may think, we cannot afford any talk or hint of a realignment of the currencies of the ERM. That would undo precisely the confidence that has seen the pound rise and the disappearance of the interest premium that previously international investors demanded to hold sterling. It is crucial that the Government hold to their present view of ensuring that we have a strong exchange rate, and one that is not accompanied by any talk of realignment in the exchange rate mechanism.

Provided that we hold fast to those policies, I expect that interest rates will continue to fall, that the pound will continue to strengthen and that that will reintroduce growth in our economy, which will mean that, in the long term, we have more potential for tax cuts with the amount of money available for public expenditure still going up.

There is another matter to which the Government should be giving their attention, irrespective of one's view of stage 3 of European and economic monetary union or the desirability of a single currency. I think that we shall not achieve a single currency, irrespective of its political desirability or otherwise, simply because, in the foreseeable future, the cost of ensuring that 12 European currencies and economies converge in the way that is required is unrealistic.

Nevertheless, it looks as though a European central bank will emerge as part of stage 2 and will have a significant role even within a Europe without a single currency. We should ignore Chancellor Kohl's reported threat that the Germans will not ratify the Maastricht agreement unless the European central bank comes to Frankfurt. The bank should come to London because that is its natural home. Not only is London the world's largest foreign exchange centre, but it has 27 per cent. of the deposits of the ecu, the new European currency, while Frankfurt's deposits are too small to quantify. Furthermore, no fewer than 520 foreign banks have offices in London, and that is more than in any other city in the world, and the City of London accounts for more than 95 per cent. of all reported European cross-border equity business. All that underlines London's position as a world financial centre. I urge the Government, in their discussions with their European partners, to ensure that the European central bank comes to the natural financial capital, London.

7.28 pm

Mr. Brian Donohoe (Cunninghame, South): I congratulate you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on your appointment to your elevated position. I am grateful to you for the chance to make my first speech so early in the new Parliament, particularly in a debate on the economy.

I begin by paying tribute to my predecessor, David Lambie. I know that, had he been here, he would have wished to contribute to the debate in his normal pleasant style. He was known to both sides of the House as "wee Davy" and his many friends will be glad to know that, having served his constituents well for 20 years, first in Central Ayrshire and latterly in Cunninghame, South, he is now enjoying life with his wife Netta and his family at home in Saltcoats.

David served Scotland well. He was Chairman of the Scottish Select Committee, and it is to be hoped that that Committee will be resurrected with my hon. Friend the Member for Kilmarnock and Loudoun (Mr. McKelvey) in the Chair. In his maiden speech, David referred to his predecessor, Archie Manuel, who was Member of Parliament for Central Ayrshire from 1950. David reminded the House that Archie's name appeared in *Hansard* more frequently than that of any other Member because of his interruptions and points of order. David promised that he would not give the then Speaker too much trouble, and I am sure that that was the case.

Cunninghame, South is a relatively new constituency, having been made up from the rump of Central Ayrshire.

[Mr. Brian Donohoe]

The population is concentrated in three principal towns —Stevenston, Kilwinning and Irvine. There are also several villages, but too many to name without missing out some and offending them. The constituency can be split in two. The great majority of the population is based in the new town of Irvine, which includes Kilwinning, with the remainder in Stevenston.

I noted from the maiden speeches of my hon. Friends the Members for East Kilbride (Mr. Ingram) and Cumbernauld and Kilsyth (Mr. Hogg)—by sheer coincidence, ex-colleagues as NALGO district officers—who represent two of the five new towns in Scotland—NALGO officials appear to want to take over Scotland's new towns—that each of my hon. Friends was of the opinion that his new town was number one in Scotland. Indeed, my hon. Friend the Member for East Kilbride claimed his new town to be the best in Britain. What neither of them can claim to represent is the only new town by the sea. That is the distinction that I can claim, and to that end I suggest that Irvine is the most attractive new town in Britain. It has tremendous facilities, such as the Magnum leisure centre and many golf courses.

The new towns face common problems, not least because of the Government's intention to wind up the development corporations and dispose of their assets. The rhetoric of the 1989 White Paper that suggested the setting up of private sector local development companies to maintain the economic momentum has now gone. Instead we are faced with the prospect of the Government removing assets from areas of great need.

To suggest stripping the development corporations of their assets at this time, with the closure of Ravenscraig in Motherwell and the rundown of ICI in Stevenston, is irresponsible. I remember as a boy going to the station in Ardrossan to meet my uncle from his work at ICI. That was one train load among dozens of buses and trains that every day transported thousands and thousands of workers to ICI. I worked in ICI from 1977 to 1981 and I remember dozens of buses queueing to take the workers home. There was also a car park full of cars. All that has gone and Stevenston has nothing left. There is nothing to replace a factory that employed thousands of people, and the local economy has been devastated.

We need an injection of resources. We already have the expertise in the form of the development corporation in Irvine. What we need from the Government is commitments.

When David Lambie entered Parliament in 1970, there was a thriving local economy, with the SKF ballbearing company, Monsanto Nylon, Essey International, Bonny-Forge and many more. On our doorstep in neighbouring constituencies there were Saxone shoes, BMK carpets, Glenfield and Kennedy and Massey Ferguson, with Ailsa Shipbuilding in Troon employing 700, myself included. All those companies have closed, with the result that unemployment in what is supposed to be a development area has been, at times, the highest in Britain. I have been unemployed on three separate occasions. That is the state of the economy in the part of Scotland that I represent.

It is only because of the activities of the development corporations that there has been inward investment, with Caledonian Paper at the forefront of their achievements. My hon. Friend the Member for East Kilbride said in 1987:

> "A simple, straightforward commitment to a regenerated industrial manufacturing base by the Government could transform East Kilbride's and Scotland's fortunes overnight." —[*Official Report*, 20 July 1987; Vol. 120, c. 147.]

Unless there is some commitment from the Government —sadly missing from the Gracious Speech—to inward investment and to extending the boundaries of the development corporations' remit to Stevenston, the pockets of deprivation and the no-go areas in my constituency will increase and there will be a threat to the whole population. That is the reality of life in Cunninghame, South, and it must not be understated by Conservative Members.

I do not want the structure of the local government reforms proposed in 1991 to be broken up into small units. For 10 years I have battled for a decent road link to East Kilbride and Cumbernauld. The fact that the best road out of Ayrshire to the rest of Scotland is a B road is disgraceful. That is the reality of the problems of infrastructure in our part of the country. I would not want the reforming of local government to mean that it does not have clout. There have been enough delays, and the killer road, the A77, should be upgraded immediately. The Government have made three separate announcements about the upgrading of that road, but work is yet to begin on the first stretch of road. We need that road upgraded now.

As a trade union full-time official involved in local government, and having travelled Scotland extensively, including the isles, I do not believe that one-tier authorities should be the Government's automatic choice. I have clear examples of both cost and resources efficiency, and I would not want that to be lost with the imposition of one-tier authorities. I hope that at a later date I will be allowed to expand my arguments on that matter.

I remind the House of David Lambie's pledge in his maiden speech, which was to behave. I will also give you that commitment, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but I will not give the same commitment to the Government unless they listen to my plea and those of my hon. Friends who have made their maiden speeches this week. The Government must listen. We hope that, in this case, the Government have listened and that they will act.

7.38 pm

Ms. Jean Corston (Bristol, East): In making my maiden speech to the House I am conscious of the honour bestowed on me by the people of Bristol, East in electing me as their Member of Parliament. I am proud to join my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, South (Ms. Primarolo) as the second woman Member of Parliament in the city of Bristol, which now serves as a shining example of equal parliamentary representation as between men and women.

Since 1983, Bristol, East was represented by Mr. Jonathan Sayeed. It is fair to say that there was little on which he and I agreed, but I know that he developed a great affection for the city during his nine-year tenure and that he worked hard to represent his constituents.

Prior to the 1983 boundary redistribution, Bristol, East was primarily contained within two former seats. One was Bristol, North-East, which was represented by Arthur Palmer. He was first elected to the House in 1949 and is

now in well-earned retirement. The other seat, Bristol, South-East was represented by my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) who was a Bristol Member for 33 years and is remembered by many constituents as an exemplary constituency Member.

The economy of Bristol, East is a microcosm of what has happened to the British economy under this Government. Fifteen to 20 years ago there were major employers in the constituency: St. Anne's Board Mills, Bristol Commercial Vehicles, Marden, Son and Hall, and Strachan and Henshaw. They have all gone. Now we have a number of trading estates, many with empty sites. We also have neighbourhood shopping centres that are characterised by vacant shops.

Many of my constituents are employed in defence-related industries. We are all aware of what is happening to them as a result of the peace dividend. However, their future is even more bleak under a Government whose diversification policy is confined to the diversification of capital, as in British Aerospace's purchase of Rover, rather than diversification of the precious skills of those defence workers. We have rapidly increasing unemployment, therefore, and the constant and insidious fear of unemployment.

The Government's solution has exacerbated the problem, in the shape of the Bristol Development Corporation whose area of responsibility is almost wholly contained within Bristol, East. It has managed to arouse the hostility of residents, business people and virtually every community group. It has not created a single job. It proposes, without holding a public inquiry, to build a dual carriageway on stilts through my constituency which will carry 42,000 vehicles a day, while at the same time the European Community is talking of traffic-free city centres.

The Gracious Speech contains a commitment to modernise the social security system, with sustained emphasis on those groups in the greatest need. Many hundreds of people in my constituency are in that category only because of the Government's failure to provide affordable child care. I refer to women on income support, with dependent children, who want to work but who find that the money that they earn is barely enough to cover child care costs. They are forced into the dependency culture against their will, and cannot exercise the freedom of choice to which the Prime Minister makes frequent reference.

Furthermore, when the House comes to debate the Maastricht treaty, many of my women constituents will want to know why they, unlike most women in the European Community, will not be given the opportunity and protection offered by the social chapter. They will want to know why they are at the bottom of the European league in maternity pay and maternity rights. They will want to know why they have such inadequate employment protection.

Many part-time workers, most of whom are women, now have to work for an employer for five years before they are covered by the redundancy and unfair dismissal legislation. They will want to know why, after 20 years of equal pay legislation, there is no real commitment to equal pay for work of equal value, and why women's pay is still only 68 per cent. of men's pay. They will also want to know why they are not going to be protected from exploitation at work, in the form of long hours, and why no provision has been made for their health and safety. What are we saying about women, as mothers, if they can be compelled to work for more than 48 hours a week and if they can be compelled to work on Sundays if they do not want to do so?

The Prime Minister is to be congratulated on rectifying a grievous oversight—because that is all that it can possibly have been—by appointing two women to his Cabinet. I congratulate the Secretary of State for Employment and the Secretary of State for Health on their appointments. However, the Queen's Speech provided the Government with the opportunity to show the women of this country that they are committed to improving their life chances as women and as employees. I noticed that there was a great deal of talk about that by the Prime Minister before the election, and at times during the election, but the Queen's Speech is amazingly silent about the Government's intentions regarding 52 per cent. of our population. That opportunity has been missed and thrown away. Women will have noticed it. The advancement of the careers of two women, however well deserved, is a very poor substitute. Much, much more is needed.

7.44 pm

Mr. Richard Page (Hertfordshire, South-West): It is my pleasure and privilege to follow the hon. Member for Bristol, East (Ms. Corston) and to congratulate her on her maiden speech. I very much appreciated her reference to her predecessor, Jonathan Sayeed.

All of us remember our maiden speeches. They are indelibly printed on our minds. I well remember my own shaking and nervous initial contribution, which contrasted with the smooth and, dare I say it, professional performance of the hon. Member for Bristol, East. The House will look forward to her future contributions. The House is becoming the place where the rights of women are championed. I am sure that the hon. Lady will take her place in the lists and make sure that the women of this country are adequately represented and their causes fought for by those like her, with her hard and forceful words. I congratulate her.

The contents of the Gracious Speech are inevitably coloured by the result of the general election. I regard political parties as a little bit like a religion. I believe that a political party should have a creed, a philosophy to follow. The Conservative party has a very simple creed: it believes in choice, in the rights and responsibilities of the individual and in the family. That is the cornerstone of our society, upon which everything else rests and from which everything else can grow.

The traditional basis of our political system—the Labour party and the Conservative party—is undergoing change. I believe that the Conservative party has found its way. It has returned to its traditional beliefs. However, the Labour party is in desperate trouble. The two-party system has been in operation for about 70 years. The Labour party grew and flourished because it believed in its own particular creed, the creed of clause IV, of centralisation, of state control, of the individual being subsumed by the state. Now, however, the Labour party has been forced by the election to realise that the country has moved on and requires different political creeds. Conservative philosophies are being adopted throughout the world, with the return of many state activities to the private sector. They are thereby becoming more efficient and profitable and are providing better standards of service.

[Mr. Richard Page]

A few days ago the BBC referred to trouble at British Gas—trouble over whether gas charges would remain static or come down. If that is the sort of trouble that we are getting from our privatisation programme, I hope that we shall get a lot more of it. With the regulatory process in place, I believe that there will be greater and greater returns to the economy from previously state-owned industries.

The Labour party will have to sit down and decide how it is going to present a credible alternative to the British people. I regret the proposed hasty resignation of its leader. The Labour party ought to have spent some time considering the way forward before rushing into that election. The House requires a two-party system, with arguments going back and forth across the Chamber. We should like the Labour party to give us a bit more of a run for our money, instead of making such a hopeless hash of things, just as it did after the two previous elections. In the 1983 election, the Labour party asked the electorate to vote for unilateral disarmament, more public ownership and more taxation, but now it says, "We are sorry, we got that completely wrong. These are our new policies." Thank heaven Conservative policies are in place to make the economy grow and become much stronger.

The Government aim to reduce the standard rate of taxation to 20p. I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Chichester (Mr. Nelson), who was recently promoted to the Treasury as Economic Secretary, will carry on the battle to ensure that the basic rate is the norm for the whole country. Perhaps with a little bit of pushing and courage we could improve it beyond that. I believe that people know how to spend their own money better than the state because they can choose how to regulate their own lives. That is the way forward.

Britain has a problem of manufacturing culture. Business, with notable exceptions such as British Aerospace, ICI or one or two other major leaders, does not invest enough in manufacturing industry as a percentage of economic activity. We do not invest enough in research and development and training. The Government have taken an immense leap forward by investing in training, but businesses must follow the example of competitors such as those in Germany and Japan by investing in growth for the future. I welcome inward investment, about which the Opposition have had to do another volte face, as it provides jobs and growth, but we must invest in indigenous industries to provide jobs, to balance our trade and to reduce our public sector borrowing requirement. Our new Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and the new atmosphere and approach to industry at the Department of Trade and Industry, which is no longer trying to phase itself out of business, will ensure that manufacturing industry grows.

For the past 10 years I have continually pushed for greater emphasis to be placed on small businesses and to ensure that they are started after proper evaluation of cash flows. As small businesses grow, they will contribute more to the economy, offer more employment and eventually grow into bigger companies. A recent survey showed that the British profile of companies was still heavily biased towards larger companies. Conservative policies have improved the status of small business, but we must do more to ensure that they grow and develop further.

I urge that we continue the Treasury's policy of encouraging smaller businesses by removing barriers. I refer to the substantial move forward in the last Budget but one of increasing the VAT band up to £36,600. That tremendous improvement took many new businesses out of the VAT trap and saved them the enormous task of keeping VAT records until they had grown.

I hope that the Queen's Speech, which points the way for further implementation of Conservative party policies, will be supported by the House and I wish to give it every encouragement.

7.54 pm

Mr. Michael O'Brien (Warwickshire, North): May I take the opportunity in my maiden speech to congratulate you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on your new office?

I wish to honour the traditions of the House. My electors of Warwickshire, North sent me here to speak out for them on issues that concern them. Some of my remarks, therefore, will be controversial, but I hope not in a partisan way. There is a fair measure of agreement among Warwickshire Members about some of the issues that I will deal with today.

Let me first pay tribute to some of those who have represented the north Warwickshire area in the past. Warwickshire, North was formed in 1983 by the amalgamation of part of the constituencies of Nuneaton and Meriden. The Bedworth part of Nuneaton was joined to North Warwickshire borough to form the new seat. The Meriden name still exists and is represented in the House by an hon. Member who is recalled in North Warwickshire borough as a hard-working and able representative.

In the late 1970s, both parts of north Warwickshire were represented by Labour Members—John Tomlinson for the Meriden seat and Les Huckfield for Nuneaton. Both are remembered with affection as good constituency Members who were able to combine a high profile on the national scene with a ready availability to deal with the individual problems of constituents. Proof that they were good Members is that when they passed from this place to a higher reward they went to that heaven for parliamentarians, where there are large offices, plenty of facilities, short hours, long holidays and very high pay —the European Parliament.

Let me pay tribute to my immediate predecessor for Warwickshire, North, Francis Maude. I fought him in two elections—1987 and 1992. He won one and I won one. Although he and I had sharp differences in philosophy, I was always impressed by the utter conviction with which he expressed his views. He argued the case for the politics that he believed in forcefully and impressively. He lost while standing firm for the principles that he believed in, and there is a certain honour in that. His career as a public representative has been temporarily halted. I do not doubt that he will return to the House, although I tell him that he will not be representing Warwickshire, North because I intend to represent the seat for a long time.

The issues that I wish to raise are central to my constituency. Some of them may have been better raised in the environment debate yesterday, but because of the pressure of time I was not called. I ask for the indulgence of the House if I deal with economic matters and then deal with matters that I should have raised yesterday.

Warwickshire, North is an area between Coventry, Birmingham and Tamworth of light industry and coal

mines. Many workers commute to the car factories and businesses of the west midlands. The failures of Government policy have hit the area hard. Car workers have lost their jobs; others have been laid off, and the financial impact of that on families has been quite heavy. Small businesses are struggling. Only this morning I was talking in my constituency to some small business men who are experiencing difficulty. Coventry pit was recently closed, with the loss of 1,300 jobs. My constituents are looking to the House for plans to create jobs and to rebuild industry. They will gain no solace from the Gracious Speech or the economic policy—or lack of it—that was outlined by the Chancellor of the Exchequer today.

My constituents voted for improved training, for investment in education and for policies to put Britain back to work. The Chancellor of the Exchequer offers none of that. He plans merely to hold down costs and to wait for the economic cycle to get him out of the mess. That is not good enough. Such an abdication of responsibility does not deal with the central problems facing Britain, nor does it recognise the fact that, although the Government are back in office, they lost 40 seats. General elections do not merely elect Governments but convey to Governments a democratic message—and that democratic message was the loss of 40 seats. Therefore, the Government's policies must be changed. There was nothing in the complacent view presented today by the Chancellor of the Exchequer which will give any solace to my constituents.

In north Warwickshire people voted Labour not only because of economic issues but because of other issues that worry them greatly. Large areas of north Warwickshire are threatened by opencast coal mining. In the run-up to privatisation, opencast mining is seen as a source of cheap coal and quick profits for British Coal but it will devastate the lives of thousands of people in my constituency. The village of Baddesley Ensor is awaiting the outcome of a public inquiry to see whether residents will have an opencast pit up to 600 ft deep and the size of 500 football pitches within 50 yards of their back gardens.

Some hon. Members with constituencies in the south of England may not understand what opencast mining can do to an area. If one can imagine a beautiful area of English agricultural countryside, then imagine a hole of the size that I have described despoiling it, and then imagine daily blasting, hundreds of large lorries on all the roads, dumper trucks, excavators, noise, dirt and air pollution, then one will begin to get an idea of the prospect facing some of the people in Baddesley Ensor. Beyond that, the villages of Dordon, Polesworth, Shuttington and Newton Regis are also threatened. About 20,000 people will be affected if the plans are accepted. Their environment will be polluted, the value of their houses will fall and a blight which could last for 50 years will be put on the area.

This is not a party political issue because Francis Maude—to his credit—also spoke out against opencast. During the general election campaign he brought the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine), the then Secretary of State for the Environment, to the village of Shuttington and secured from him a commitment to review the planning guidance on opencast mining. That guidance and the review of it is, with the re-election of a Conservative Government, the best chance that the residents of Baddesley Ensor and the adjoining areas have not to be facing the prospect of opencast mining in their back gardens. The review must be thorough, with full consultation among all the interested parties. The Government must deliver on their commitment.

At present the opencast guidelines contain a presumption in favour of British Coal getting permission to introduce opencast mining and that presumption must be reversed. If protection of the environment means anything to the Government, it must surely mean that the environment should not be despoiled unless those damaging it can prove that it is necessary. I want the guidelines to state that no opencast mining should take place except on derelict land which needs to be reclaimed and only where local people want that opencast mining in order to reclaim that derelict land.

That is the basis of the charter on opencast mining drawn up by the Coalfield Communities Campaign, a charter signed by members of all parties, including some Conservatives. That charter should be the basis of the Government's review of opencast guidelines. The British Coal opencast executive is pursuing a short-term policy of quick profits while ignoring the impact on the environment. Even for those who are committed to privatisation, the present expansion of opencast mining must surely be too high a price to pay in damage to the environment and to people's lives.

As if the threat of opencast mining were not enough, I am sorry to say that there are other threats to Warwickshire, North. Briefly, one of the threats is of a toll road running through the western part of the constituency. That toll road willl turn the environment of a number of villages into something akin to traffic islands. That is utterly unacceptable, and I—as the Member of Parliament for the area—shall do all that I can to oppose it.

I must raise today an issue which I believe is to be raised tomorrow. I understand that a statement—or at least an announcement—may be made to the effect that Warwickshire will be among the authorities that will possibly be poll tax capped. This issue concerns all hon. Members who represent Warwickshire. The hon. Members for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) and for Warwick and Leamington (Sir D. Smith) and my hon. Friend the new Member for Nuneaton (Mr. Olner) have all spoken forthrightly against poll tax capping of Warwickshire should the announcement be made tomorrow. For local people it is a constant source of——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. May I ask the hon. Gentleman to resume his seat? I must draw to his attention the fact that he has had his 10 minutes, and I am sorry to have to ask him to resume his seat.

8.5 pm

Mr. Colin Pickthall (Lancashire, West): In the past month or so, I have been evolving a theory—based on my own experience—that no human being ever gets fed up with being congratulated. You, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and your colleagues must be testing that theory to the point of destruction at the moment. Nevertheless, may I add my congratulations to the others.

Clearly, I wish to keep to the conventions of the maiden speech, although, like my hon. Friend the Member for Warwickshire, North (Mr. O'Brien), I shall find it difficult. I have listened with admiration to my hon. Friends' maiden speeches and, in particular, to that of my hon. Friend the Member for Barrow and Furness (Mr. Hutton) who represents the area from which I originate and of

[Mr. Colin Pickthall]

which I am patriotically fond. He spoke up well for the area and also analysed its problems well. I can tell him—through the written word—that my extensive family and friends in the area admired him as a candidate and will admire him even more as a Member of Parliament.

For parliamentary purposes, my constituency is called Lancashire, West. I wish that it were called "West Lancashire", which is the name of a place, not merely a convenience for carving up a city or a shire. My constituency occupies a large area between Wigan and Merseyside to the south and east and between Southport to the west and Preston to the north. It is based on the towns of Skelmersdale and Ormskirk, the smaller communities of Burscough and UpHolland, many villages and a vast rural hinterland. The rural area contains some of the richest agricultural land in the country. If one were to eat cabbage—which, as a good northerner, I believe that one should—the odds are that from time to time one would have eaten a part of west Lancashire. I wish to outline briefly the problems of the area and, having located it geographically for the edification of the House, I should perhaps also locate it in its immediate history.

I have lived and worked in and by the town of Ormskirk for 22 years and I represented it as a county councillor and now as a Member of Parliament. Since the war, the town has been represented by Sir Harold—now Lord—Wilson, by Sir Douglas Glover, by Mr. Harold Soref, by Mr. Robert Kilroy-Silk and, until recently, by Mr. Kenneth Hind. I make no comment on the totality of that legacy, other than to say that it is unlikely that I shall ever write a column for the *Daily Express*, and I shall certainly never appear in a colour supplement's feature "A Room of One's Own", up to here in warm water in my swimming pool and surrounded by exotic plants. Even if I had a scintilla of ambition to be Prime Minister, I should never be daft enough to say so in front of a camera a few weeks after being elected.

My immediate predecessor, Mr. Kenneth Hind, was a very energetic man. He often appeared to be the only energetic Conservative in the constituency and, judging by the amount of business that he had begun and that has now come my way, he must have had an extensive acquaintance with the difficulties of the area. I wish him and his family well, as he returns—I presume—to his career as a barrister. Personally, I compliment him on the two hard, but clean, fights that I have had with him in the constituency, in 1987 and last month.

The largest centre of population in west Lancashire is Skelmersdale—a new town which was designed to have a population of 80,000 and an infrastructure for that number of people, but whose growth was artificially stunted by Government at just over half that number. It has no hospital, no town hall and no magistrates' courts and it lacks many other facilities that one would expect to find in a town of that size. It has scores of empty factories—and, alongside them, 17 per cent. unemployment. Throughout its existence, the town has had a distinguished and excellent industrial relations record, with an enterprising, lively population, which has been woefully disregarded by Governments—not only Conservative Governments.

The Queen's Speech includes a Government commitment to an urban regeneration agency. I shall press as hard as I can for that agency to focus on Skelmersdale and other such towns. I do not criticise the attention which has rightly been paid to inner-city problems, but that has had the unfortunate effect of diverting attention from smaller towns with severe urban problems. "Skem" has no urban programme, although its problems can be measured as more severe than those of neighbouring towns in the north-west which receive such help. In Government calculations, Skelmersdale is lumped in with its rather more prosperous hinterland.

The new towns are deemed to be finished. Some may be finished, but Skelmersdale is not. Those new towns were about homes and jobs. Skelmersdale got the homes—although now, sadly, they have run out—but it has never had the jobs. Over the past two years the picture has been demoralising, if not disgraceful. For example, in order, it was said, to maximise shareholders' profits, Procter and Gamble closed a highly profitable factory in the town—or rather, it was not entirely closed; there is a little rump left, but 350 jobs were lost. The company is moving the production elsewhere in the country—with the help of Government grants. That is patently absurd. Only this week I heard that another well-respected and highly profitable factory in the town is about to do the same—to turn off workers so as to maximise shareholders' returns. Such examples lead me to agree entirely with the speech made by the Archbishop of Canterbury a few days ago—he got it spot on.

I could list a long series of disasters—beginning with Thorn and Courtaulds in the late 1970s, and Dunlop. Yet, despite all that, the people of Skelmersdale do not give in. They strive hard to rescue themselves and to find jobs. They have the advantage of a superb further education college, which—under the aegis of Lancashire county council—has done a great deal to help. The people do a great deal to make their town attractive to live in.

The Queen's Speech offers no hope to the more than 2,000 people in my constituency who are seeking homes for rent. That argument has been knocked around the Chamber over the past two days. As with many other hon. Members, most of my correspondence and case work is about housing problems. One homelessness presentation is made every working day to my local housing authority; the demand simply cannot be met. Furthermore, the authority does not have the funds to refurbish the 40, 50 and 60-year-old houses which need modern heating systems, new roofs, damp courses and window frames, better drains and so forth.

West Lancashire has built no new general needs houses since the early 1970s—it has been under Conservative control all that time—although I must admit that it has built reasonable sheltered accommodation. Yet £14 million sits in the council's capital receipts—this is a microcosm of the bigger debate earlier. A fraction of that £14 million could do an enormous amount to solve the housing problems in my area.

If we as a nation can get housing right, we would go a long way towards solving many other problems, such as family break-up, bad health, delinquency, vandalism and demoralisation. Even transport, and some of the crucial economic problems, can be seen as dependent on the provision of proper and suitable housing.

Skelmersdale development corporation was wound up five years ago. Since then the Commission for the New Towns has systematically asset-stripped the town of £36 million. We approached the then Secretary of State for the

Environment, now the President of the Board of Trade, but we got the brush off. We asked for a small proportion of that money to be left in the town to prime the pump for industrial recovery. But that was not to be. We were told that the Government—although it was not a Tory Government then—had spent money on developing the town in the 1960s, and now they wanted their money back.

The resources to solve the housing problems in west Lancashire, and many of the economic problems, already exist. No increase in taxation would be required. The Government's refusal to allow proper use of those resources is an act of peculiar perversity, which creates a potential social calamity—especially for the people of Skelmersdale.

I know that I am in danger of speaking for too long, but I shall try to raise two more topics quickly. First, I notice in the Queen's Speech measures designed to improve agricultural marketing. As an outsider to agriculture in west Lancashire, I have always thought that it was crackers to encourage set-aside while we import half our food.

Finally, I shall mention the tomato industry. The supermarkets have announced that they intend virtually to close that industry by moving the time when they start buying British tomatoes to later in the year.

8.16 pm

Mr. Gordon Prentice (Pendle): Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for calling me for this, my first speech in the Chamber. It is an honour and a privilege to represent the people of Pendle, which is in north-east Lancashire. The constituency has been represented by good democratic socialists. It takes in the former seat of Nelson and Colne, which was held by Sydney Silverman for 23 years. He is still fondly remembered in the constituency for his many achievements, notably his campaign to abolish the death penalty.

In the 1970s the seat alternated between the major parties. My hon. Friend the Member for Warrington, North (Mr. Hoyle) held it between 1974 and 1979. My immediate predecessor, John Lee, was here for 13 years —which was no mean achievement. He had a genial approach to politics, and was always courteous and pleasant to me. He developed an interest in tourism and the hospitality industry, and returned to the Back Benches almost three years ago to enable him to spend more time on his many business interests. I wish him well in pursuing those interests.

John Lee is the chairman of Country Holidays, a firm based in Earby, in my constituency. Since February last year that company has laid off 131 people, blaming the state of the economy. The company, which is in the service sector, is one of many in Pendle which are reeling from the effects of the worst recession in 60 years.

The north-west has suffered badly from Government policies. There are closures, redundancies and incredibly low wages. According to Government figures, people there are worse off than those in the south-east, where average personal disposable income is 16 per cent. higher than the United Kingdom average. In the north-west that is 8·2 per cent. below the average. There are many people who are struggling on extremely low incomes. Yet the Government are implacably opposed to a minimum wage on the ground that it would cost jobs. That is from a party that has presided over spiralling unemployment and the worst record in the European Community.

The whole debate on the minimum wage is coloured by the hypocrisy of so many of the participants. I have met no one earning less than £7,000 a year who thinks that the minimum wage is a bad idea. Some of the most vocal critics of the minimum wage are hon. Members who are also members of Lloyd's of London. Until they fell on hard times recently, the average unearned profit per year for a syndicate member in Lloyd's of London was £26,613. Yet the same hon. Members chided the rest of us by saying that a minimum hourly rate of £3·40 would smash the economy.

How can the Prime Minister talk about wealth "cascading down the generations" when inheritance tax begins to bite at £140,000 and in the north of England, in my constituency, the average inheritance is £13,000? The major source of inherited wealth is property, but real wealth does not come from property; it comes from making things—from manufacturing.

Some 55 per cent. of my constituents are employed in manufacturing industry, which is the highest percentage of the work force engaged in manufacturing of any constituency. However, the constituency has suffered crushing blows. The textile industry, the mainstay of the area, is visibly contracting. Under the Tories, it has lost thousands of jobs.

The last occasion on which my predecessor spoke in the House on the textile industry was on 12 January 1990. He listed four local firms which, he said,

"battle away in intensely competitive markets."—[*Official Report*, 12 January 1990; Vol. 164, c. 1233.]

He mentioned Smith and Nephew where 170 people lost their jobs this Easter. He mentioned Dawes and Co where 25 people were made redundant recently. He mentioned CV Woven Fabrics at Barrowford where 206 people were made redundant last year. He mentioned Thomas Mason in Colne which closed down at Christmas after 200 years. What Napoleon could not do to Thomas Mason of Colne, the Tory Government have done: they have closed it down.

In every other country with a textile industry of any consequence, the Government are in there helping, promoting, advising and investing. Here in Britain a hands-off policy towards industrial investment is killing our industries. My constituents do not want preferential treatment; they want a level playing field on which we compete on equal terms with our competitors. Instead, the Government sell Britain's manufacturing industries short.

In engineering and in aerospace, there is a big Rolls-Royce plant. There are great uncertainties. Unemployment, although mercifully below the national average, has more than doubled since 1979.

It was not just the crushing of Pendle's manufacturing base which lost the Tories the seat on 9 April. It was the poll tax, a £19 billion bungle which has a crippling effect on the traditionally low-rated areas of north-east Lancashire. Many constituents saw their household bills leap from £160 to £1,200—in a low-wage area. The Pendle factor entered the poll tax lexicon.

My predecessor first spoke out publicly against the poll tax on 5 December 1990, after the Thatcher factor had been removed by the Conservative parliamentary party. He told the House that the Conservative parliamentary

[Mr. Gordon Prentice]

party had been "clubbed and conned" into supporting what he called a "wretched tax". Indeed, Conservative Members were clubbed and conned.

It was, therefore, surprising that we had a visit to Pendle earlier this year by the present Secretary of State for the Environment who was primarily responsible for putting the poll tax on the statute book. Irony follows irony. He is now the man with the primary responsibility for introducing the council tax. On 16 November 1987, he told the *Financial Times*:

"A property tax is not a fair tax . . . so we must abolish the local property tax."

The Secretary of State for the Environment will introduce a property tax, the council tax, which will not be fair to Pendle. Those living in the largest and most expensive properties will never pay more than three times more than those living in the meanest, smallest and most modest accommodation will pay.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) said yesterday, the council tax will have surprises for us yet. It was rushed through the House in three weeks when the Tories voted to guillotine debate. The price for that haste has still to be paid. The Conservatives, even after 13 years, constantly make mistakes.

I will say a word or two about democracy and the lack of democracy in contemporary Britain. We debated local government yesterday. Every local government reorganisation since the war has been carried out by the Conservatives, and each has been deeply flawed. The Conservatives set up the Greater London council and they abolished the GLC. They set up the Inner London Education Authority and they abolished ILEA. They set up the six metropolitan counties and they abolished the metropolitan counties. In 1974, they set up the two-tier district and county structure which they now propose to change yet again.

This Chamber is supposed to be at the heart of our democracy, yet our system of government is a perversion of democracy. Half this building is given over to Members of Parliament who are not elected but who are here by birth or patronage. That is absolutely indefensible. We meet in a capital city with no democratically elected city-wide government, yet we tolerate the continued existence of the City of London Corporation which is a cross between Gilbert and Sullivan and a music hall joke. The Lime Street ward, which is one of 25, has 18 electors. Eight of them belong to the Obertelli family who run a sandwich bar.

Much of Britain's system of government is not just Victorian but feudal. It needs massively updating to make it relevant to the 21st century. Overhauling our constitution is not a task in which the Tory party should engage—it will not. We will strive to ensure that overhauling the constitution and rebuilding our manufacturing base are the projects of the next Labour Government.

8.26 pm

Mr. George Mudie (Leeds, East): I offer my congratulations to my hon. Friend the Member for Pendle (Mr. Prentice). I have worked with him in local government for a number of years and I have admired his abilities. I am privileged to have the opportunity to work with him in the House in his new career in Parliament. It is difficult for me to follow such a spirited speech, although it is also quite a relief. I was afraid that my speech might be too controversial, but it will now look rather tame in comparison.

I congratulate you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on attaining your high position. I also welcome the opportunity to pay tribute to my predecessor in Leeds, East. Over the past few days I have heard many hon. Members speak of more than one predecessor. In my case, that would give me great difficulty because Denis Healey represented Leeds, East for exactly 40 years. Having researched his maiden speech, I have decided that my Chief Whip will have to explain to me why Denis Healey got 24 minutes for his maiden speech whereas I have only 10 minutes.

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Anthony Nelson): He is bigger than you.

Mr. Mudie: He is bigger than me. It will be of interest to the House to hear that his maiden speech was given to the House on 14 May—which is tomorrow—in 1952, which is 40 years ago. I intend to keep up the Leeds, East tradition of changing Member of Parliament at only 40-year intervals.

Denis was and is widely admired and respected in Leeds, East. If it were not in Yorkshire, I would have said "widely loved" but love is too strong a sentiment for anyone in Yorkshire to express in public. He was admired and respected. He brought to his constituency the same ability, humour, intelligence and exuberance which hon. Members will recall that he demonstrated in his years in the House. As for exuberance, he certainly had self-confidence. I notice that in the first paragraph of his maiden speech he used the word parthenogenesis. One has to be pretty confident to use that word in the first paragraph of one's maiden speech. It is with considerable pleasure that I thank both Denis and Edna, on behalf of their many friends in Leeds, East.

I noticed that in one of the parliamentary guides my constituency is described as "inner city residential". That is a description with which I cannot disagree but which signals two factors. One is a lack of commercial and industrial properties on a desirable scale, and the other is a level of unemployment well above the national average and hidden unemployment in horrifying proportions in the various communities. The official figures show an increasing number of unemployed in my area. Most alarmingly, literally thousands of individuals have been unemployed for more than one year. Many have been unemployed for very lengthy periods indeed.

I listened yesterday to the Secretary of State for the Environment declare:

"There can be no forgotten few—nor can there be any exclusion zone in our inner cities or on any of our housing estates; no no-go areas where the writ of opportunity does not run."—[*Official Report*, 12 May 1992; Vol. 207, c. 507.]

What did that writ of opportunity offer? The Secretary of State went on to say that my long-term unemployed would have the choice of school for their children. I think that he has been using a ministerial car for too long. How do people use the choice of school? By car? They do not have cars. By bus? Does the Secretary of State know the bus fares that are currently in force as a result of Government policy?

The Secretary of State went on to say that the writ of opportunity would include the opportunity for people to

purchase their own council housing. Does not that, even to Conservative Members, sound slightly insensitive? He went on to offer an urban development agency. The latter policy item is the only investment item which could be seen as relevant to the unemployed in the inner city and my area. I suggest that, even if such an agency succeeded, it would do little to affect the sustained and disturbing level of long-term unemployment.

The proposal for an urban development agency comes in the same week that the World Bank changed its 40-year-old development strategy and stated that the trickle-down policy of dealing with poverty simply does not work. I appeal to the Government to think again. I appeal to them to think about the money that they are to spend on that policy and to consider spending it on two separate matters of policy which would have profound economic and human consequences in my and other inner-city wards.

The first matter is training. People who are long-term unemployed need skills that will allow them to compete in the job market. I watched during the last boom how economic prosperity never reached certain communities in my constituency. People without job experience, qualifications or skills were stranded too far up the beach for the economic tide ever to reach them.

We live in an economy in which each boom leads to recession, largely because our industries and our economy overheat. Skill shortages in our industries are a key part of that problem. My right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) raised the spectre of public expenditure cuts in the training budget. There were stories this week in the *Financial Times* that employment training was being critically reviewed. If the Government are looking at ET, I hope that they will increase the benefit paid and extend the length of time for which unemployed people can be on the scheme. The 12-month period is too short to skill a person who has been unemployed for years.

The other matter on which the money for the urban development agency should be spent is child care. The issue was spelt out this evening in a first-class speech by my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, East (Ms. Corston). Even when training opportunities are available, women are deprived of their chance to escape poverty because their children stop them from taking up the places. Women cannot easily take up places. Their approach is underpinned by the feeling that, even if they obtained skills training, they would have similar difficulties in keeping a job.

Our inner cities are filled with people who need every help that we can give them. They do not want charity. They do not enjoy welfare. They want to join the general relative level of prosperity—in short, they want to work. I hope that they will get their wish. I shall work as their Member of Parliament to ensure that their voice is heard and their wishes are fulfilled.

8.35 pm

Mr. James Boyce (Rotherham): Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I offer my congratulations, first to my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Mudie) on his maiden speech. I also join the lengthening list who have congratulated you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on your elevation to office. I also congratulate the Speaker of the House. It was a privilege to take part in the historic event of electing a woman to the Chair of the House. I hope that that signifies a new era of equal opportunities in the House.

May I now pay my respects to my predecessor, Stan Crowther, who was a much admired and respected Member of Parliament, both in the House and in his constituency, which he served for the best part of 16 years. Stan Crowther was a man of many parts. Not many people know that he was the only person to hold the position of mayor of Rotherham on two separate occasions. That is unique. I hope that I have not ruined too many pub quizzes by revealing that fact to the House.

Stan Crowther's work with the Select Committee on Trade and Industry also earned him the respect of the House. During the time that he served on the Committee, it became a labour of love to Stan. He is also much respected by the steelworkers, for whom he did a great deal of work in the Rotherham area. I am sure that the House would wish to join me in wishing Stan and his wife Margaret a long and happy retirement.

I should now like to mention Stan's predecessor, Brian O'Malley. Some long-serving Members of Parliament may remember Brian. Again, he was much loved in the Rotherham constituency. I did not know Brian personally, but many Members will remember him with great affection. In his maiden speech to the House in May 1963, he brought to the attention of the House the desperate shortage of decent, affordable housing. In his maiden speech in July 1976, Stan Crowther pointed to the growing unemployment in the region that he represented, especially among school leavers of that particular year. After 29 years and almost 16 years respectively since those maiden speeches were made, it is my sad duty to report to the House that those two blights on society and indictments of successive Governments have not yet been removed from our land.

I wish to pose a few questions to the House. How, in an age of unprecedented unemployment in the building industry, can there be an unprecedented shortage of housing? In Rotherham constituency, where unemployment stands at 16·6 per cent., why does the number of people on the housing list for accommodation or a transfer to more suitable accommodation stand at 22,163? When the local authority has money in the bank from the proceeds of council house sales, why is it prohibited by legislation from building council houses to take away the blight that I mentioned?

Where has the revenue from North sea oil gone? Chancellors have had billions of pounds to give away in recent years. Where has it gone? Where is the product of selling off the family silver? Gas, water and everything that we hold dear to our hearts have been sold off. Those were rhetorical questions because the House knows the answers. They went in tax handouts to the richest members of our population.

I believe that the House would agree with the old maxim, "Where there's a will, there's a way." It is difficult for a new Member of Parliament to conclude that the Government have the will to remove those blights from society.

I came here, rather naively, at the end of the nightmare of Thatcherism with the view that the Prime Minister, on his own mandate, could present the House with progressive legislation in the Queen's Speech which would take away the blight and scourge of homelessness and unemployment from this land. I was willing to forgive the

[Mr. James Boyce]

Prime Minister for the 12 or 15 months that he had to live in the shadow of Mrs. Thatcher. I was willing to forgive him because I am a reasonable man.

I am not prepared to forgive the Prime Minister now for coming along with more of the same. He had the opportunity—the missed opportunity. The people of Rotherham are long suffering, but they have suffered long enough.

I am a reasonable man, and I will give Conservative Members the benefit of the doubt, but I shall return to this subject at every opportunity, and every time that they fail to make life better for the people of Rotherham, I will accuse them and they will stand indicted.

8.42 pm

Mr. Malcolm Wicks (Croydon, North-West): In the absence of those best qualified, I congratulate hon. Friends who have made their maiden speeches as I rise to make mine.

The constituency of Croydon, North-West is interesting for its recent political history. It may not be unique but, within little more than a decade, it has been represented in Parliament by members of the three major political parties. Mr. Bill Pitt represented the constituency very ably for the Liberal party, which was then part of the Alliance, and more recently Mr. Humfrey Malins represented it on behalf of the Conservative party. I hope that the constituents of Croydon, North-West have now arrived at the end of their political journey and that the seat will not be represented by the Scottish nationalists in a few years' time; but that will be for the electors to decide.

As is traditional, I pay sincere tribute to my predecessor, Humfrey Malins. He is well known to Members of the House and he was highly regarded. In an interesting, multicultural constituency he was certainly highly respected, and he made friends and helped many people from the different groups making up that energetic community.

Humfrey had one claim to fame which left me somewhat anxious. Recently, I believe that he was captain of the House of Commons rugby team. [HON. MEMBERS: "Yes, he was."] My hon. Friends confirm that. In my early days here, I was not sure whether, as a Member for Croydon, North-West, I had to take on certain responsibilities. Having only played the football game with the more sensibly shaped ball, that is one responsibility that I could not carry out on behalf of my friend Humfrey Malins.

Croydon, North-West constituency contains people with energy and ambition—people with positive aspirations for themselves, for their families, their children and their communities. However, it is not without major problems. It has the dubious distinction of heading the Lord Chancellor's league table for county courts in areas with high mortgage repossessions. Those people who think of Croydon as an affluent town will be surprised to learn that it has high unemployment rates and that as many as one in seven men are out of work. Therefore, it is a town with much pain and poverty.

May I share a first impression with my right hon. and hon. Friends? Of course, as a new Member, I was impressed by the pomp and pageantry of the House at the state opening of Parliament and on the exciting day when the first woman Speaker was elected. We can draw on the strengths of history; there is much to be said for that. But I shall share a story with hon. Members. On 9 April, at 10 o'clock—the hour when the polls closed—I was hurrying from a committee room in Thornton Heath. The first person I saw after 10 o'clock, in the early days of a new political era, was a dishevelled gentleman who was going through a litter bin in the London road in Thornton Heath. Judging from his behaviour, he was mentally ill. I asked myself what Parliament and democracy had to offer him. He was probably not on the electoral register.

As I came to Parliament down Victoria street on my second day, I was stopped by another gentleman of 70, asking for the price of a cup of tea. I obliged with a few coins and asked him what explained his situation and where he lived—*[Laughter.]* This is serious. He told me that he had been in a mental institution for 35 years, and that he was now—these are my words and not his—in the care of the community. Again, he is probably not on the electoral register and is not represented here by any hon. Member. What does our democracy and what can this Parliament offer him?

As a new Member of Parliament, I am left to face this challenge: whether we can bridge the gap between the pomp and circumstance of Parliament and the poverty and pain in many of our communities.

Unemployment is one of the obvious causes of pain in our society and in a sensible debate it would be central to our concerns about macro-economic policy. The year 1992 will be remembered for many things—for the election, of course, and for the beginnings of a new Europe. However, I hope that later this year we will recall that it is 50 years since the publication of one of our great state papers, the Beveridge report on social insurance and social security. When talking about the five giant evils which needed to be confronted in the post-war period, Sir William Beveridge described them as want, disease, ignorance, squalor and idleness.

The 50th anniversary of that report is a cause for some concern about social policy and cause for a new Beveridge debate. Sir William Beveridge said of idleness, by which he meant unemployment, that it was the largest and the fiercest of the giant evils and the most important to attack. He said that, unless we tackled idleness and unemployment, all the other gains of post-war reconstruction would be out of reach.

I am struck by the fact that, because of the memories of mass unemployment in the inter-war period and the solidarity that wartime brought, Governments of both left and right, under Harold Macmillan as well as Harold Wilson, viewed the attack on unemployment as central to economic and public policy. When unemployment reached 600,000, hon. Members on both sides of the Chamber—this is no mere party political point—were horrified and wanted to do something about it. There was concern and compassion for the unemployed on the Tory Benches as well as on other Benches. Where is the concern and compassion today?

Far from macro-economic policy saying that the attack on unemployment is central to our objectives, sadly, in the 1980s, we have witnessed the use of unemployment as a tool for depressing demand. Unemployment has been driven up as a tool of economic policy, rather than an attack on unemployment being a key objective of policy.

Although the Government have the advantage of a fourth term, I hope that there will be no smug

triumphalism. In a sense, politically, they can ignore the arguments, and the pleas of the unemployed, but it would be a foolish Government who chose to do that. Unless we can articulate in the Chamber the needs of the unemployed, and unless we can secure a decent response from the Government—I have an open mind about that—although it may serve a short-term political purpose, it will prove unwise for our country.

We cannot survive as a community—united, strong and offering equal opportunities—if we have high unemployment rates. I ask the Leader of the House to set out the Government's views on full employment. Is it now an objective; if so, how do the Government seek to achieve that objective? If they have decent policies, I shall be the first to support them.

8.50 pm

Mr. Keith Vaz (Leicester, East): Let me join hon. Members on both sides of the House in congratulating you on your elevation, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Your work in the House is well known. Let me mention particularly the way in which you have developed links with the high commission of Sri Lanka, and the excellent work that you have done with Governments in south Asia.

Let me also say how pleased I was to be present for three excellent maiden speeches by Labour Members. My hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, North-West (Mr. Wicks) told us of his deep concern about his constituency, and I am sure that we shall hear many more contributions from him about the need to defend the people of Croydon, North-West. He spoke eloquently about unemployment in his constituency. I know that no other Member of Parliament will work as hard as he will to defend his constituents.

The speech made by my hon. Friend the Member for Pendle (Mr. Prentice) reminded me of my own maiden speech. He and I share a deep interest in the textile industry. Many of my hon. Friend's constituents work in the industry, and we look forward to hearing more of his sterling contributions.

My hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Mudie) does not know this, but I was in his constituency on Saturday night and early on Sunday morning. I hope that we can do something about the signposts in Leeds: I went around the one-way system many times, perhaps because Leeds United supporters, their team having won the league title, had turned all the signs around. The people of Leeds have elected a Member of Parliament who will serve their interests extremely well, and I welcome him to the House.

I thank the electors of Leicester, East for returning me to serve a second term. A decent swing to Labour took place in the constituency, and I believe that we now have a mandate to defend the national health service in Leicester—protecting it from further privatisation—and to speak on behalf of the workers, especially those in the footwear and textile industries that form such a vital part of the local economy.

Hon. Members may think that I go on too much about the plight of victims of the collapse of the Bank of Credit and Commerce International, but I have to do it, and I make no apology for doing so. Matters have now reached a crucial stage. I am delighted that the new Economic Secretary to the Treasury is present, as BCCI comes within his responsibility—not the bank itself, of course, but the aftermath of what happened. We had many meetings with his predecessor, who showed a great deal of sympathy; on one occasion, indeed, he offered us tea, but he offered little else. We hope that we shall receive a more positive response from his successor when we meet him.

Nine months ago, on 5 July 1991, BCCI was closed by order of the Governor of the Bank of England. Since then, the depositors and creditors have received no compensation, either from the Government of Abu Dhabi—in terms of the proposals presented in November—or from the British Government, under the deposit protection scheme. In a letter dated 9 April this year, the Governor told me that the Bank of England hoped that statutory payments would be made as quickly as possible. Three days ago, a hearing took place in the High Court. The Vice-Chancellor adjourned the proceedings concerning BCCI for a further 28 days, the purpose being that the Abu Dhabi Government should provide clarification of the amount of compensation to be paid.

I pay tribute to the Vice-Chancellor and to his predecessor. They are models of British justice, and they have provided the victims of BCCI, in an ever-changing world, with a great deal of hope. They have acted in accordance with the original views of the depositors, in that their judgments and decisions have allowed us to continue with the campaign to seek justice and compensation for the victims.

Those 28 days—ending on 8 June 1992—are crucial. The settlement agreement proposed by the sheikh of Abu Dhabi in November last year, which was arrived at with a great fanfare and spoken of with great enthusiasm by Mr. Brian Smouha, the liquidator of BCCI, does not appear to be in tatters; it appears to be the subject of careful examination. Clearly, if the settlement were to be accepted and acceptable, the court would have ordered it to be accepted on Monday, subject to the agreement of the proper percentage of depositors. It was the interim creditors' committee that decided to commission a report by the City solicitors' firm Norton Rose on whether the deal should be accepted.

In my post this morning, I received a copy of the confidential Norton Rose report. It is very detailed and thorough, but it causes me a great deal of concern. A number of aspects are commercially sensitive, and I do not want to quote anything that would prevent depositors from receiving a decent amount of compensation. I am concerned, however. Throughout the report, mention is made of the knowledge of certain officials in the Abu Dhabi Government about some of the loans that were taken out. There are frequent references to Mr. Al Mazrui. Mr. Mazrui is the head of the sheikh of Abu Dhabi's private office, and was one of the directors of BCCI. He is a person of great importance in Abu Dhabi, and has led the negotiations with the liquidators. Comments about him in the report are therefore important.

Under the paragraph heading "Knowledge of the Ruling Family" on page 25, the following appears:

"Mr. Al Mazrui, according to Price Waterhouse, admitted that he had benefitted from 'no risk' transactions in which he purchased BCCI Group shares. Such transactions, including the manipulation of the BCCI Group share price, were clearly fraudulent. Mr. Al Mazrui apparently informed other Government officials of his involvement in April 1990.

Mr. Al Mazrui, according to Price Waterhouse, confirmed a fictitious loan in the name of Shaikh Khalifa. However, we note that Shaikh Khalifa has denied knowledge of this loan.

[Mr. Keith Vaz]

> There appears to be evidence that ADIA was involved in a proposed 'no risk' share transaction in 1981 and in an 'out of book' loan in 1988 to finance the buy-back of shares from Shaikh Khalid Bin Mahfouz."

The report makes further statements about the knowledge of Mr. Al Mazrui.

I should make it clear that there is no suggestion in the report that the ruler of Abu Dhabi, Sheikh Zayed, had any knowledge of what happened. In previous debates, I have been full of praise for the sheikh, and for what the Government of Abu Dhabi have done following the closure of the bank. They have done a great deal more than our Government. I remain convinced that the ruler of Abu Dhabi knew nothing about it. Paragraph 31 of the Norton Rose report says:

> "Turning however to the Majority Shareholders, unlike section 214 which we mention next, there is no provision relevant to fraudulent trading applying to 'shadow directors'. We do not consider that common law notions of vicarious liability can have any application to fraudulent trading under the Insolvency Act and so we see no means by which Mr. Al Mazrui's knowledge (if any) can be imputed to the Majority Shareholders if they did not have actual knowledge within section 213."

It is clear from the Norton Rose report that there is no question of the involvement or knowledge of the ruler of Abu Dhabi. However, depositors and creditors will be concerned about the mention of Mr. Al Mazrui. His name appeared before in the section 41 report prepared by Price Waterhouse.

It is of the utmost importance that we have a statement from Mr. Al Mazrui either to deny knowledge of what the report refers to or to give an explanation of his involvement. That is important because negotiations are now at a critical stage.

It is also important to consider the agreement prepared by the liquidators in consultation with the ruler of Abu Dhabi. This agreement, which involves the injection of $1·7 billion in compensation, means that if the depositors and creditors accept it, they will have to waive their right to sue and the right to promissory notes that total several billion dollars. It has been said that they are worth about $3 billion. Therefore, it is right for people to question why on earth they must give up the claim to promissory notes when they have been offered something substantially less.

Although I have not criticised the agreement until now, it is important to pause to consider the levels of compensation that have been offered. Although I do not wish to disagree with Mr. Smouha, the liquidator, the feeling among creditors and depositors who have written to me is that they will not receive the 30 or 40 per cent. that was on offer. They want to know why they will have to wait for an instalment scheme for that money when we are dealing with a country and a Government that have substantial funds.

The Norton Rose report is of such importance that, yet again, the issue has become an intergovernmental matter. We have had meetings with the Foreign Secretary, and I had a brief meeting with the Chancellor of the Exchequer. I also had many meetings with the former Economic Secretary to the Treasury. It is of the utmost importance, in view of the 28-day period, that the Foreign Secretary, in consultation with the Chancellor of the Exchequer, takes on the responsibility of negotiating a better deal for the people who have lost so much money. We are dealing with British citizens—1,200 employees and 40,000 depositors —who face the loss of considerable amounts. I am sorry that the Chancellor is not here because the biggest single depositor—as an individual or a company—in BCCI, who had £20 million in the bank, is one of his constituents from Kingston, Surrey. Despite the fact that the Chancellor has a constituency interest, he appears to show no interest.

I want the Foreign Secretary to visit Abu Dhabi at the first opportunity in order to thank the sheikh of Abu Dhabi for the money that has become available, and to ask for more. We need more money if the depositors are to be satisfied.

There is a saying that every cloud has a silver lining, but for the liquidators of BCCI, Touche Ross, that cloud has not a silver lining but a gold one. It is claiming fees of £1 million a week since the bank went into liquidation. Creditors and depositers want to know why Lovell White and Durrant, their solicitors, who are also claiming substantial fees, and the liquidators did not produce a report of the quality of the Norton Rose report. It is important that we have an explanation from the liquidators about what has happened.

I also want the liquidators to hand over to Norton Rose all the documents contained in appendices A, B and C in the report. Norton Rose says that it has still not seen many documents. It refers to a building in Abu Dhabi called Kew and says:

> "We have not received a response to our letter of 24 April 1992 to LWD requesting access to the documents at Kew. Our understanding is that Kew contains a vast number of documents which could be relevant to the matters raised in the Report."

Norton Rose then says that there are documents at 100 Leadenhall street in London to which it does not have access.

It is important to get the full facts and to find out who is hiding what from whom. I hope that the Economic Secretary to the Treasury will agree to meet a delegation of Members who have a constituency interest and review the current situation concerning BCCI before the 28 days elapse.

The Bigham report is about to be published. We seek an assurance from the Chancellor—perhaps the Leader of the House could give it to us—that when the Bigham report is handed to the Chancellor, who was a witness to the Bigham inquiry, the Chancellor will publish that report. It is important that it is not kept hidden. Newspaper reports say that it will be kept hidden until the Governor of the Bank of England has retired. That is not good enough —*[Interruption.]* The Economic Secretary is making a face. One way to disprove those rumours it to give an unequivocal undertaking that the Bigham report will be published.

Will the Leader of the House pass on to the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry our deep concern about the way in which the liquidator is demanding the full payment of BCCI loans from former customers of BCCI? On Monday I had a meeting with one customer who had a loan with BCCI of some £1·7 million. His assets are worth considerably more than that. He told me that they were worth £3 million. Because he could not realise that loan immediately, the liquidators put him into receivership. As a result, he has had to close his firm and make people unemployed. That will continue if the liquidator continues to demand the full payment of loans. It is totally unacceptable, at a time of recession, that it does not accept instalment payments.

I hope that when the Leader of the House replies he will assure us that the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry will meet us. The former Secretary of State for Trade and Industry—the present Secretary of State for Social Security—with whom I have had few dealings, his Department and the insolvency service acted perfectly properly in dealing with BCCI. They took on board representations and went to court to argue for a creditors' meeting. It is still the only liquidation in history in which creditors have not met to appoint a creditors' committee. That is why we must accept an interim committee. The Secretary of State for Social Security acted perfectly properly and we thank him for what he did, but we expect the same treatment from the present Secretary of State for Trade and Industry.

The future direction of the whole issue rests with the Government. If the British Government were to support the view of the depositors and creditors of BCCI that more money should be made available, the Abu Dhabi Government would act positively. The Abu Dhabi Government have shown themselves to be extremely generous. We seek justice for the victims of BCCI. The Norton Rose report will add to the moral responsibility of the Abu Dhabi Government, who are of the highest quality and wish to protect not only their reputation but the reputation of the Arab world. Many Arab banks such as the Islamic bank and individuals are concerned that they will lose so much money. The Government should come out, for the first time, with a clear statement that they think that there should be more compensation. The Foreign Secretary, or even a junior Minister, should go to Abu Dhabi to argue for more money. If that were to happen, this extraordinary story—which started in tragedy, has moved on to farce and has had catastrophic consequences for a section of the British community—could be brought to a just end.

9.10 pm

Mr. Bruce George (Walsall, South): I apologise to hon. Members for my absence during almost all of the debate on the Queen's Speech. I have been away for pressing personal reasons. I have been camped out at the hospital in Merthyr Tydfil for so long during the past two weeks that my hon. Friend the Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) may think that I am engineering a coup. That is not the case, and I shall apologise to him when I see him.

I think that all Labour Members have now got over their disappointment that the Queen's Speech has not been a Labour Queen's Speech—at least I have. But we must once again play an important, constructive role in Opposition. We look forward to a Queen's Speech delivered by the Queen on behalf of a different Administration. Democracy, as well as the interests of our constituents, will be advanced when that long-awaited day finally dawns.

I wish to speak on matters of particular interest to me: defence, law and order, and terrorism. The early part of the Queen's Speech related to defence and the future of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation. Since 1949, we have managed to sustain the Alliance despite external and internal threats. The external threat has now largely disappeared, and the threat to the future of the Alliance derives more from internal pressures. In particular, the French are ambivalent towards NATO. Having left the integrated military structure a quarter of a century ago, they have never fully reconciled themselves to the fact that NATO has survived and become stronger without their direct military presence and co-operation.

The Alliance that has served us so well in the past has much life left in it and should be used until alternative arrangements can be found superior to those that have been to our general advantage since 1949. I do not remotely consider the Western European Union as ready to assume that role. In the immediate, medium or long-term future, I do not believe that the European Community will provide a substitute for NATO in providing adequate defence and security. I do not consider that the embryonic and, I hope, reformed and improved Council on Co-operation and Security in Europe will provide collective security or collective defence.

The legacy and memory of the League of Nations is still strong. Over the next decade we will be served by a multitude of institutions related to security, foreign policy and defence, and the primary one must be a reformed NATO. That organisation has gone through the process of adapting itself to the new circumstances and now, to use a well worn expression, holds out the hand of friendship to former adversaries through the North Atlantic Council, and provides enormous assistance, just short of a security guarantee.

NATO has proved that it is relevant to the future. I will give every support to the Foreign Secretary, the Secretary of State for Defence and the Prime Minister in their work with Alliance members to ensure that the organisation has a continuing relevance. We must fight the battle in our own country, in Europe and, particularly, in the United States to convince our American allies that, although they have profound economic and social problems at home which must be addressed, they will not solve their problems by extricating their forces from the continent of Europe. If the United States removes all or a substantial portion of its forces from the continent, it will become marginalised in Europe. Canada will find that to its cost as it removes its limited forces.

If isolationism reasserts itself during the presidential election and pressure is placed on the President after the election to reform American security policy it could lead to the eventual dissolution of NATO. That would be catastrophic. Even the French must appreciate that the security of Europe has not depended upon French armed forces or French nuclear weapons. I do not devalue those forces when I say that the security of Europe has largely been due to the continuation of an alliance. That alliance has great future potential for security, not simply for existing members but for the whole continent and even beyond.

Next week's debate on the Maastricht treaty must encompass whether we believe that the time has come, or will ever come, for the European Community to be directly or indirectly capable through the Western European Union of picking up the mantle of the Alliance. I am not saying that Europe cannot do more or that the European pillar of NATO should not be strengthened, but we must not convey to our American allies the feeling that the Europeans are ganging up in some sort of caucus and presenting a collective European view to the United States. Such a move would be a recipe for the progressive collapse of the Alliance and would be to our disadvantage.

Following "Options for Change" the Ministry of Defence was led by the nose by the Treasury. History has

[Mr. Bruce George]

shown that the Treasury gets more wrong than the economy because it has not proved to be competent as an alternative defence ministry. The Treasury has created its own perception of the threat and has imposed upon the Ministry of Defence a policy of restructuring Britain's forces. My history books show that in that regard in the 1930s the Treasury did not do too well. It should keep its nose out of future policy making.

I do not say that we should not reduce defence expenditure and I agree that there must be restructuring. However, it is wrong to reduce our Navy to about 35 frigates and destroyers and to reduce the Army to 160,000 men in a world which is still fraught with difficulty and danger for this country. I hope that the new Secretary of State for Defence will look again at the "Options for Change" programme and will conclude, as many hon. Members have concluded, that an army of 160,000 men and women and 38 infantry battalions is dangerously low.

In the last part of my speech I shall deal with terrorism and law and order. It is embarrassing for me to say that in one area of policy I support the Government. I do not say that often, but if we are compelled to implement the elimination of frontiers in 1992 we shall create not just an open market for goods and services but an open border for terrorists and drug smugglers. Those who wish to come to the Community will find it easy to pierce the weak external wall and would soon find places where entry was simple. Consequently, the hands of the police and the Government in dealing with crimes such as drug smuggling and terrorism would be weakened. We must resist that because if we eliminate internal borders we shall have to introduce continental practices such as identity checks and the depositing of passports in hotels. Would the British public be prepared to accept that?

9.19 pm

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): I begin by adding my congratulations to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on your elevation to the Chair and by wishing you well on behalf of my right hon. and hon. Friends.

It is my formidable task to review six days of debate. In truth, I can make only brief references to some of the highlights and some of the more important issues discussed. The speeches of the mover and seconder of the motion on the Loyal Address were, as they often are, entertaining and amusing. Even on his way out, the right hon. Member for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker) characteristically made his exit from centre stage. No shrinking violet he —even though he was going, he quit from the spotlight. In a typical moment, without even a blush, he castigated the Liberal Democrats for their support for proportional representation, although he once argued for it to prevent what he called domination by a "minority of a majority."

Even the most right hon. Gentleman's most stern critics have a sneaking admiration for his flair fading into brass neck. His Panglossian ability to portray failure as success, defeat as victory, served him very well during his less-than-successful sojourn at Tory central office. The right hon. Gentleman has had a distinguished career at the top of British politics—no mean feat. His humanity was obvious in his generous remarks about my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition and I personally wish the right hon. Gentleman well.

The hon. Member for Gedling (Mr. Mitchell) also made an excellent speech, in which he charmed the House with his fluent wit and humour. One of the hon. Gentleman's student contemporaries disclosed his apparently early commitment to keeping expenditure down when he remarked:

"Whenever we went for a drink Andrew seemed to have left his wallet behind."

I am sure that the hon. Gentleman has changed and many hon. Members will support his call for further reforms of the procedures of the House, even if we cannot promise to share his political views.

I congratulate the Leader of the House on his new position. He has a difficult path to pursue. It will help him if he remembers throughout his period of office, as I am sure that he will, that he is not simply a senior and important member of the Government but holds a special position in relation to the House of Commons. He must uphold its traditions and ensure that the Government's majority is not used oppressively—as it so often was in the last Parliament—and that the rights of the Opposition, the minority parties and Back Benchers are respected. He will have my whole-hearted support for his efforts to reform the House, its procedures, services and facilities and my implacable opposition to any attempt by the Government to abuse those procedures for political advantage.

It is a great pleasure to have so many new Labour Members in the House, although I shall miss those excellent by-election victors John P. Smith, Sylvia Heal, Huw Edwards and Ashok Kumar. They all brought ability and commitment to our debates and I hope that we shall see them all back here again before too long. I have a special word of commiseration for the unlucky defeat of Frank Doran in Aberdeen, South. I hope that he, too, will soon rejoin us.

In all, I calculate that 53 maiden speeches, 41 of which were by Labour Members, have been made in this debate. That is the kind of proportion that I like and I hope that we can look forward to a similar share of the debate on many future occasions.

There have been 10 maiden speeches today, all from Labour Members. My hon. Friends the Members for Bristol, East (Ms. Corston), for Rotherham (Mr. Boyce), for Leeds, East (Mr. Mudie), for Croydon, North-West (Mr. Wicks), for Pendle (Mr. Prentice), for Nottingham, South (Mr. Simpson), for Cunninghame, South (Mr. Donohoe), for Falkirk, East (Mr. Connarty), for Lancashire, West (Mr. Pickthall) and for Warwickshire, North (Mr. O'Brien) all made excellent contributions to the debate. Indeed, it was an awesome performance from the Labour Back Benches and we look forward to many more such contributions.

I could not possibly refer to many of those speeches, so I decided to be partisan about the whole matter and to refer, in a little more detail, to the speech of my constituency neighbour, my hon. Friend the Member for Barrow and Furness (Mr. Hutton). He had an outstanding victory in that important Cumbrian constituency. I share with him many constituency problems. Some of my constituents from Millom work at the VSEL plant in my hon. Friend's constituency, and some of his constituents work at the British Nuclear Fuels plant in my constituency.

West and south Cumbria suffer from poor road and rail links, inadequate transport services, rising unemployment and huge forecast job losses. Our case, as my hon. Friend

made emphatically clear, demands urgent Government action. I look forward to working closely with my hon. Friend in the common interests of the communities that we represent.

I have no doubt that many new colleagues bring welcome fresh minds, fresh views and fresh ideas to the House. I urge them to set aside their initial shock at the inadequate genteel antiquity of the Palace and to mobilise, on both sides of the House, to change things here in the interests of our constituents, our staff and the visitors and, not least, in the interests of more rigorous and effective scrutiny of the Government.

This is a very different House of Commons from its predecessor. I refer not just to the change in personnel but to the change in the numerical balance between the parties, which has so many important implications. For example, I do not believe that a Bill to introduce the poll tax would get through a House of Commons of this nature and balance. I refer also to the implications of those changes for the membership of Select and Standing Committees. I hope that we can establish Select Committees without undue delay. In that context, I say to the Leader of the House that, without vacillation or delay, we must have agreement on the establishment of a Scottish Select Committee. We will press for Select Committees to cover all Departments of State and we shall strongly support —as I do personally—the proposal to recreate the Select Committee on Science and Technology. I served on the former Committee of that name for six of my early years in the House.

I hope that the Leader of the House will ensure early publication of the report on allowances for the salaries of Members' secretaries and research assistants and for the purchase of office equipment, on which the House as a whole must reach a decision as soon as possible.

There are some things to welcome, but much to regret, about the Queen's Speech. In general terms, it completely lacks the freshness, the thrust and the new vision that the British people were led to expect from a Prime Minister with his own mandate. Indeed, with references to reducing the burden of taxation, to restricting the public sector, to trade union legislation, to state control over our schools and to more privatisation, the tone and content of the Queen's Speech have an uncanny resemblance to the one introduced by the Prime Minister's predecessor, Margaret Thatcher, in 1979.

On succeeding days Ministers addressed the House as though the manifest failures of the past 13 years had never occurred. Unfortunately, it is all too clear already that the answer to the obvious and fair question, "What will the Government do differently to repair the nation's economy and our industrial base, to reduce unemployment, to house people decently and to avoid the repetition of obvious past mistakes?" is, "Nothing". The Government intend to change nothing. There is nothing new, nothing fresh. They will just muddle on as before.

At the end of a particularly vacuous and evasive performance on Thursday, the Chief Secretary to the Treasury at last confirmed our judgment of the Government's intentions when he concluded his speech by saying:

"the policies that succeeded in the 1980s will succeed again in the 1990s."—[*Official Report*, 7 May 1992; Vol. 207, c. 169.]

There was a similar, irrelevant and pettily abusive speech today from the Chancellor. There we have it. Voltaire's Dr. Pangloss rides again. Failure is success. Industrial decline is ignored. Unemployment goes unremarked: it was mentioned once in the Tory party manifesto but not at all in the Queen's Speech. The Queen's Speech was almost silent on the economy. After reading it, most people would be surprised to learn that Britain is suffering its longest recession since the war—as my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) pointed out earlier today—that unemployment is now more than 2·6 million, and rising, and that major forecasts do not see unemployment coming down at all this year.

We were told that the prime aim of Tory economic policy is to reduce inflation. Most rational people, though, would measure success in terms of growth and employment, as well as the control of inflation. Keeping inflation low and stable may be a key element in producing sustainable growth, but that is not in itself a sufficient policy to produce a strong economy and lasting prosperity. Nevertheless, there was no recognition of the need for a new agenda—no apparent understanding that a firm, sustainable recovery must be based upon investment, not just upon consumption, and that mere talk and deregulation get us nowhere beyond the short term.

The Prime Minister's decision, on the other hand, to acknowledge the existence of the secret intelligence service is welcome, if long overdue. What we all knew about for years and read of regularly in the newspapers has finally been confirmed. The Prime Minister deserves credit for that. At least as important were his decisions to announce the full list of Cabinet committees, with their terms of reference and membership, and to make available to the House the guidance on procedure and the conduct of business that has long been sought, according to the Prime Minister's own words, by many hon. Members. However, this rather coy lifting of the veil of secrecy has much further to go. It is regrettable that the Prime Minister's commitment to more open government does not extend to making the security services directly accountable to a committee of Privy Councillors of the House, or to a freedom of information Act.

I well recall, as a young Member of the House, having a meeting with the then Prime Minister, Harold Wilson, together with a few colleagues. I have to confess that it was a rather unruly meeting. As it concerned Members' salaries and allowances, the temperature rose. I well recall Lord Wilson, as he now is, saying to us, somewhat pompously, "I intend to break with all precedent and tell you that this matter is on the agenda for the Cabinet on Thursday", to which one of my colleagues, who had better be nameless, replied, "Hell, Harold, we read that in *The Guardian* yesterday." That sums up the long-standing attitude to Government secrecy.

I say to the Leader of the House and his right hon. and hon. Friends that progress is welcome but it is simply not enough. The Government will be urged again and again to break out of this unnecessary, antiquated stranglehold of secrecy, which is a disadvantage to better government, better debate and better informed discussion of the issues.

In addition, the Prime Minister's reform of government does not extend to Scotland. In his opening speech, he referred once again to "taking stock" of the position north of the border. The people of Scotland do not need to take stock any more. They have taken stock of the Conservative party and, for that matter, of the minority parties.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: We won two seats in Scotland.

Dr. Cunningham: Two seats; heavens above! The Labour party in Scotland is hardly trembling at that outcome, even though we regret the loss of Frank Doran.

The reality is that again and again, in election after election, the people of Scotland have made it abundantly clear what they want. The Prime Minister's remarks smack of someone who intends to maintain the inadequate status quo, which the Scottish people again rejected on 9 April. As my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) pointed out on Monday, the change that Scotland wants is

"the creation of a directly elected body reflecting Scottish opinion and with the power that matters in a democracy—the power to make law."—[*Official Report*, 11 May 1992; Vol. 207, c. 458.]

Another glaring omission, Madam Speaker—I am delighted to add my personal congratulations on your appointment and to see you in the Chair—is the lack of a Bill to establish an environmental protection agency with comprehensive powers to monitor, control and improve the environment. The Prime Minister was ready to filch Labour party policy and to set up such an agency before the election, but apparently he is backtracking on his commitment to protect the environment.

In his speech last Wednesday, the Prime Minister again spoke of more choice in education and of opening up opportunity for children. The Tory concept of choice in education has at its heart the extension of opted-out schools. The new Secretary of State for Education has already said that he wants most of the 4,000 secondary schools in England and Wales to be grant maintained within a few years. As is so graphically shown by the decision that Wandsworth council took a few days ago to reintroduce selection, increased opting out will mean a back-door return to the testing and sorting of children at the age of 11 and of first and second-class provision for children in our schools.

As we warned during the election campaign, a two-tier education system, with well-funded opted-out schools at the top, and a second tier of poorer local education authority schools for the rest, will be a bad deal for our children, for their parents and, most important, for Britain.

The hidden Tory agenda on the future of the national health service has re-emerged. Almost as soon as the election was over, fresh speculation about the closure of two famous London teaching hospitals began. Yesterday, despite Government attempts to massage the figures, big increases in the number of people waiting for up to a year for hospital treatment were revealed. The simple fact is that long waiting lists are the recruiting serjeants for private sector health care. People who can afford to pay —and even some who cannot—are being forced into private treatment to avoid prolonged pain and suffering. Far from developing a nation at ease with itself, the Government's policies are creating a nation where people have to pay fees for their health.

As for cutting waiting lists, as someone called out from a sedentary position, I refer that right hon. or hon. Member to *The Guardian* of 13 May and the article entitled "Big rise in queues for hospital treatment". That is the reality of what is happening in the national health service in spite of the apparent belief of Tory Members of Parliament in their own propaganda. The reality is regrettably clear—a Tory party, which in many quarters is surprised to have won the election, has a new mandate——

The Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office (Mr. Robert Atkins): Nonsense.

Dr. Cunningham: Even the hon. Gentleman cannot say that with a straight face. The reality is that we have a Tory Government with a new mandate but no new agenda, a Government with a long record of economic incompetence, unfairness and neglect who begin a new Parliament without any regrets or clear vision for the future. Indeed, for two hours of this evening's debate they could not muster a single speaker to support the Government's economic policies—not one Tory Member of Parliament was here to speak in defence of the Chancellor's speech today.

The Chancellor of all people must realise that today's bombast and bluster will not help as his day of reckoning approaches with the autumn and the expenditure cuts that we all know are coming. I fear once again that the British people and their services will pay a heavy price for a Tory Government who are already limping along, weighed down by the huge burden of a public sector borrowing requirement that they cannot sustain, a balance of payments deficit that they cannot correct and an industrial base that they cannot regenerate.

The Labour party, with its new Members of Parliament, is determined to do everything in its power to protect Britain and its people from the failures already so evident in defective policies and in the inadequate programme in the Queen's Speech. That is why we shall vote for our amendment.

9.41 pm

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton): Madam Speaker, whatever else may be said of our week of debates on the Queen's Speech, there has been one element of absolute unanimity in the warmth of the welcome given to you. I shall say simply, "Please count me in."

It is also appropriate to welcome my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, South (Mr. Morris), the hon. Member for Pontefract and Castleford (Mr. Lofthouse) and my hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Drake (Dame J. Fookes) to the offices of Chairman and Deputy Chairmen of Ways and Means which they have already begun to perform with distinction. I am sure that the whole House will join me in paying tribute to the dedication shown in those offices in the previous Parliament by the former Chairman of Ways and Means, the right hon. Member for Doncaster, Central (Mr. Walker), and his deputy, Sir Paul Dean, who is no longer in the House.

There has been one other unifying feature of our debates which is the quantity—to which the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) referred—and the quality of the maiden speeches. Today has certainly been no exception, including valid contributions—and this is slightly at variance with some of the remarks made by the hon. Member for Copeland at the end of his speech—from my hon. Friend the Member for Gillingham (Mr. Couchman), my right hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Sussex (Mr. Renton), my hon. Friends the Members for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall), for Wyre Forest (Mr. Coombs), for Hertfordshire, South-West (Mr. Page), for

Fulham (Mr. Carrington) and for Hazel Grove (Sir T. Arnold). There were also significant contributions from other parties on a number of issues, including a contribution from the hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Vaz) whom I cannot see now. He made a number of points which he asked me to pass on to my right hon. and hon. Friends, which I shall certainly do.

We heard a speech from the hon. Member for Walsall, South (Mr. George) which might almost have counted as a speech in support of the Government, compared with what the hon. Member for Copeland said. We also heard from the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) and from the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon). We also heard an important speech from the leader of the Ulster Unionists, and a vigorous speech from the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) which had the air of being directed at least as much to members of his own Front Bench as to members of the Conservative Front Bench, and I suspect that we may hear more about it in coming debates.

The hon. Member for Copeland mentioned one maiden speech in particular. I enjoyed the maiden speeches of the Labour Members—I believe that the hon. Gentleman said that there were 10 of them—who spoke in the debate, although—I believe that my opinion would be echoed by some of my hon. Friends—one or two of them considerably stretched the conventions of the House, and the patience of my hon. Friends.

The hon. Member for Nottingham, South (Mr. Simpson) made a pleasing tribute to his predecessor, Mr. Martin Brandon-Bravo, although at one stage I thought that he was trying to compete in hype with the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher). The hon. Member for Falkirk, East (Mr. Connarty) referred to his own "spiky style"—a definition with which I would not wish to quarrel. The hon. Gentleman left not a hamlet in his constituency unmentioned.

The hon. Member for Cunninghame, South (Mr. Donohoe) paid a proper tribute to his predecessor, David Lambie, for whom we had a great deal of respect. He also made remarks which I know will be carefully noted by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland. He gave what I believe he described as a "qualified commitment to behave". It remains to be seen what that means.

The hon. Member for Bristol, East (Ms. Corston) made a pleasing claim about equal opportunities in Bristol, following her election. Her kind words about her predecessor, Jonathan Sayeed, will have been appreciated by my hon. Friends. The hon. Member for Warwickshire, North (Mr. O'Brien) paid a remarkable and well deserved tribute expressing respect for his predecessor, Francis Maude. He, too, managed to mention a remarkable number of the communities in his constituency.

The hon. Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Pickthall) made what has been relatively rare today—a traditional maiden speech, staying away from controversy. He, too, paid a pleasing tribute, expressed with great flair, to his predecessor, Ken Hind, which was appreciated by my hon. Friends. The hon. Member for Pendle (Mr. Prentice) returned to what I could call the aggressive mode, and paid tribute to his predecessor principally by quoting his speeches. I hope that the hon. Gentleman's remarks about another place will not be read there, or they could cause some stir.

The hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Mudie) described his own ensuing speech as tame in comparison —which was right. He pleased us all both with his tribute to Denis Healey, and his hope that his constituency's tradition of keeping its Members of Parliament for 40 years at a time would continue with himself. That remains to be seen. The hon. Member for Rotherham (Mr. Boyce) made a vigorous speech, and paid tribute to his predecessor, Stan Crowther, who was much respected by my right hon. and hon. Friends.

Finally—on my list, at least—the hon. Member for Croydon, North-West (Mr. Wicks) paid a proper tribute to his predecessor, Humfrey Malins, and did so with style and elegance. Something that he said gave me something else in common with him—we have had various contacts over the years because of his interest in social security through the Family Policy Studies Centre. I now understand that he shares with me an addiction to the round football rather than the oval football. I am glad to have that, too, in common with the hon. Gentleman.

I am filled with admiration not only for the performance of hon. Members who have made maiden speeches but for their courage and self-confidence in performing so soon. If my memory serves me, when I was first elected, in February 1974, it took me far longer to take the plunge. I was finally driven to do so, in what was sure to be a short Parliament, by my anxiety that it could end without my having opened my mouth at all. Finally, I addressed the House on the subject of pigs—not a matter on which I have seen the need to trouble the House further in the intervening 18 years.

In its own way, my speech tonight is a maiden, as the hon. Member for Copeland acknowledged. It is my first as Leader of the House. I want to pick up his remarks straightaway by taking this opportunity to acknowledge clearly the special nature of the post in which responsibility as a member of the Government is combined with responsibility to the House as a whole, to all groups within it and to the interests of individuals as Members regardless of their party label. I will keep all that much in mind.

My comment leads me naturally to say something about certain issues currently on the House's agenda which, although not covered in the Loyal Address, have been raised in a number of speeches in the debate, in the opening speech of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and in the speech by the hon. Member for Cunninghame, South.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, South (Mr. MacGregor), the previous Leader of the House, will be remembered for a number of achievements including the establishment of the European Standing Committees and other improvements in procedure. He may be especially remembered for the way in which he took forward my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister's clear commitment to the reform of our hours and working practices. The setting up of the Select Committee chaired by my right hon. Friend the Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling) and that Committee's very valuable report have done the House a great service.

To my hon. Friend the Member for Gedling (Mr. Mitchell) who, in his elegant speech seconding the motion, urged us to make progress on reform I can say that I too, although it is getting a bit in the distant past, have been a Member with young children and I know the pressures to which he referred.

[Mr. Tony Newton]

Last week, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister reinforced his personal view, first expressed when he became Prime Minister 17 months ago, that it is time that some of our procedures were reformed. I share that view and I also agree with him that these are matters for the whole House. I can tell the House tonight that I will certainly consult widely on how best to take forward the Jopling report.

I noted the intervention by my right hon. Friend the Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale in the Prime Minister's speech and his hope that changes could be implemented from this autumn. He will not expect me to pre-empt the process of consultation by responding to that tonight. However, I can tell the House that I hope to find time for a debate on the report in the not-too-distant future. It is important in this new Parliament with many new Members that everyone has a chance to reflect on the changes proposed which would represent the most radical shake-up of our working practices for many decades.

In the light of the remarks made by the hon. Member for Copeland, I should say a word about the Select Committees. In this debate, a number of right hon. and hon. Members have asked me when the various Select Committees will be set up. My right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins) and my hon. Friend the Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery), drawing on their previous experience as Chairmen of the Liaison and Procedure Committees, have put to me strongly the case for speedy action, as did my right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell) in his trenchant contribution to the debate last Friday. To him and to all who have raised the matter, I must make it clear that I share their desire, which I sense is widely felt among hon. Members of all parties and which I am grateful to the hon. Member for Copeland for expressing in his speech, that we should do everything possible to avoid any undue delay.

The House will realise that it is necessary to consult through the usual channels on such matters as the allocation of chairmanships and members between the parties, and any changes necessary to take account of the departmental reorganisation announced by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister after the election. I cannot tell the House how long that may take, but I can make it clear that the process has already begun.

I can also say that I hope that we may be able in the next week or two to appoint the "domestic" Committees which are so important under the new structure for the management of this place which is being implemented following the Ibbs report.

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): Will the right hon. Gentleman make it clear to the House that it is the Government's intention that, unlike in the previous Parliament, there should be a Scottish Select Committee?

Mr. Newton: I have noted what the hon. Gentleman has just said and what was said by his hon. Friend the Member for Copeland. My remarks about the spirit in which the Government and I, as Leader of the House, will approach these matters were intended to embrace all issues of concern which relate to Select Committees. It would not be appropriate for me tonight to discuss individual Committees, however important that may be to individual Members.

In turning to the other half of my dual role in the debate tonight, I naturally sought inspiration by turning to the record of what transpired in the previous such debate barely six months ago on 7 November 1991. Listening to the remarks of the hon. Member for Copeland on a more general front tonight added to the interest with which I read his words on that occasion just six months ago. He was then, as now—although I doubt that he expected still to be—shadow Leader of the House. I hope that he never joins the team of weather forecasters because he said of the Prime Minister:

"He is a caretaker who will not last."

Having delivered himself of that, he proceeded to have a bit of fun, as he saw it, at the Prime Minister's expense. I have to say that it was reasonably funny. He said:

"He says that he wants women in his Cabinet—but not yet. He says that he wants Britain at the heart of Europe—but not yet. He says that he wants to abolish poll tax—but not yet."

[Interruption.] It was not bad at the time.

"He says that he wants to reform the DTI and put the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) in charge—but not yet. He says that he wants a mandate of his own"—

[HON. MEMBERS: "But not yet."] Six months later, it has rather more of the air of a tribute to my right hon. Friend's capacity to deliver. Every one of those commitments has already been ticked off. The Queen's Speech which underlies the debate will put dozens more on the way to achievement.

The hon. Member for Copeland then gave us another treat. He went swiftly on to conclude his remarks with another ringing forecast. He said:

"We look forward to the next Gracious Speech, because we shall write it."—[*Official Report*, 7 November 1991; Vol. 198, c. 662.]

Well, in the hon. Gentleman's immortal words, "But not yet". Not this year, not next year, or the year after, or the year after that. If I were him, especially in view of the track record of the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East on getting things wrong, I would not put my shirt on writing it in five years' time either.

As we conclude the debate, I shudder to think what would be the background to our discussions today and what the Queen's Speech would have contained if the hon. Member for Copeland had achieved his ambition of moving from that side of the House to this. Instead of seeing interest rates coming down, we should have seen them going up. We should have seen millions of ordinary taxpayers bracing themselves for tax increases that would have killed off any hope of economic recovery. We would have seen a programme carried through which would have killed the prospects of recovery stone dead. We would be debating a Queen's Speech that would restrict people's opportunity and diminish their standard and quality of life.

One has only to recite the list of what was on offer from the other side of the House to know why the British people decided to take their custom elsewhere and to vote for a different programme, of which this Queen's Speech is the first instalment. It will continue the expansion of ownership and the widening of opportunity and choice in education, pensions and housing. It will continue to extend the benefits of privatisation and the improvements in the quality of life in our inner cities and throughout the country that we have set in hand. It will carry forward the key theme of improving the quality of service throughout the public sector in health, education, social security and

social services. It is a programme which was clearly endorsed by the whole country a month ago. It will be clearly endorsed by the House of Commons tonight.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 283, Noes 335.

Division No. 3] **[10 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nicholas
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyce, Jimmy
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Cabom, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Ms Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronald *(Blyth V)*
Cambell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, James
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ms Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Dr John *(C'p'l'nd)*
Dafis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, William
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek *(B'p Auckland)*
Foster, Donald *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Gapes, Michael
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harvey, Nick
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Hendron, Dr Joe
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate *(Vauxhall)*
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoff
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Ms Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Ms Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Ms Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Ms Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross, C & S)*
Kennedy, Ms Jane *(L'p'l Br'g'n)*
Khabra, Piara
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McCartney, Ian
MacDonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyle Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
Oiner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew' E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Ms Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Smith, Llewellyn *(Blaenau G'nt)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Ms Rachel *(D'mline W)*
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Tipping, Paddy
Tyler, Paul
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Harold
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow C)*
Wicks, Malcolm H
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Anthony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Martyn Jones and
Mr. Thomas McAvoy.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*

Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chaplin, Mrs Judith
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ruclif)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirvanjan
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, John Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam
Fox, Sir Marcus
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Philip
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Ms Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nicholas
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heath, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W H'f'rdshire)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kilfedder, James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Ms Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
McCrea, Rev William
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Maginnis, Ken
Maitland, Lady Olga
Major, Rt Hon John
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, John
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'xl'yh'ath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trimble, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wolfson, Mark

Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. Sydney Chapman.

Question accordingly negatived.

Amendment proposed, at the end of the Question, to add:

"but humbly regret that the Gracious Speech fails to provide for the essential investment in education and training which is vital to the country's economic recovery, lacks the basis for a sustained policy of low inflation and stable interest rates, and specifically lacks a commitment to joining the narrow band of the ERM and establishing the operational independence of the Bank of England, fails to address the fundamental problems of the economy, by increasing investment, competition and the establishment of a flexible labour market in which employees increasingly share in the success of their companies, and does not contain legislation to deal with the problems of environmental pollution; and finally regret the absence of any legislation to provide for electoral reform for local, Westminster and European elections or to provide for Parliaments for Scotland and Wales."—*[Mr. Ashdown.]*

Question put forthwith, pursuant to Standing Order No. 32 (Calling of amendments at end of debate), That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 18, Noes, 332.

Division No. 4] **[10.18 pm**

AYES

Alton, David
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Beith, A. J.
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Foster, Donald *(Bath)*
Harvey, Nick
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross, C & S)*
Lynne, Ms Liz
Maclennan, Robert
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyle Bute)*
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Tyler, Paul
Wallace, James

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Archy Kirkwood and
Mr. Simon Hughes.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chaplin, Mrs Judith
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ruclif)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Niranjan
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, John Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam
Fox, Sir Marcus
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Philip
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Ms Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nicholas
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heath, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W H'f'rdshire)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kilfedder, James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Ms Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
McCrea, Rev William
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Maginnis, Ken
Maitland, Lady Olga
Major, Rt Hon John
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Paice, James

Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'xl'yh'ath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trimble, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. Sydney Chapman.

Question accordingly negatived.

Main Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, as follows:

Most Gracious Sovereign,

We, Your Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled, beg leave to offer our humble thanks to Your Majesty for the Gracious Speech which Your Majesty has addressed to both Houses of Parliament.

PETITION

Chapeltown Nursing Home

10.32 pm

Ms. Helen Jackson (Sheffield, Hillsborough): I wish to present to the House a petition from the residents of the Chapeltown nursing home, which—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Lady is attempting to present a petition on behalf of her constituents. Would those hon. Members who are leaving the Chamber please do so quietly and rapidly so that I can hear what the hon. Lady has to say?

Ms. Jackson: I would like to present a petition from the residents in a nursing home in my constituency. It is signed not only by the residents but by their families and the staff, and is supported by 13,000 signatures of the people of Chapeltown and the surrounding area. It is proposed to close the nursing home or transfer it out of the national health service, and they are protesting vigorously at the closure of such an excellent model institution, which was opened in 1983 as a pilot project for long-term nursing care of the elderly within the NHS into which these people have paid throughout their lives.

The petition concludes:

Wherefore your petitioners pray that your honourable House do urge the right hon. . . . Secretary of State for Health, to intervene in this proposal to close the Chapeltown Nursing Home

in my consituency of Sheffield, Hillsborough.

To lie upon the Table.

Community Hospital (South Trafford)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Wood.]*

10.34 pm

Sir Fergus Montgomery (Altrincham and Sale): It is pleasant to have an Adjournment debate so early in the evening. I had hoped that if I was favoured by such an early call you would be in the Chair, Madam Speaker, but I see that you are leaving.

I welcome my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State who will be making his maiden Front-Bench speech. I am sorry if I am not as nice to him as I might have been, but I feel strongly about this subject. I am angry, and my hon. Friend may get the full force of my anger.

I have been angry for a long time about the hospital provision in my constituency, and for many years we have had our hopes raised only to have them dashed. Initially, the hope was that we would get a district hospital in the south of Trafford. To spur matters on, I had an Adjournment debate on 30 June 1980, when my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young), who is also sitting on the Front Bench tonight, was the Minister responsible. On that occasion he said that a decision on the new hospital would be reached with all possible speed.

Because we did not hear anything, in June 1981 I went to see my hon. Friend the Member for Reading, East (Sir G. Vaughan), who was the Minister responsible at that time. He agreed to consider the proposals that he was about to receive for the new hospital. In October 1981, the scheme was accepted by the Department and by the regional health authority. Approval in principle was sent to the Department in July 1982 and a deadline of December 1982 was set for a response.

In November 1982, the Department replied that further work was required on the document and the regional health authority agreed to purchase the site. However, the Department and the Treasury could not agree without any firm scheme being included in the capital programme. In April 1983, at the formal review of capital schemes, the regional health authority could not guarantee a place in the programme and its previous acceptance of a start in 1987-88 was not confirmed.

In October 1983, we appeared to have some rather cheering news. We were told that the hospital had provisionally been put in the programme for the 1988 financial year and that the Treasury had approved the purchase of the site. Many of my constituents thought that their dream of having a district hospital would at last come to fruition—a hospital that had been promised for so long would at last become reality.

Our hopes were dashed when, at the beginning of 1984, the regional health authority suggested that the hospital should be reappraised, and in September 1984 we were told that on the criterion of capital costs a development at Wythenshawe was cheaper than building a new hospital in south Trafford. Our hopes for a district hospital vanished for ever. I hope that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary can imagine the disappointment and the anger felt by people in my constituency.

Before this debate tonight, I collected the copies of *Hansard* that contain my speeches on the need for hospital provision in my constituency. I have them all with me. I remind my hon. Friend that, in the musical "My Fair Lady", Eliza Doolittle sings a song that includes the phrase, "Words, words, words—I'm so sick of words", and I heartily endorse that. I, too, am sick of words and I hope that we will now get a little action. We have had no tangible result from the words that have been said over the years.

Unfortunately, the sorry saga is not yet over. Having failed to get a district hospital, we decided that it would be at least advantageous if we could get a community hospital in south Trafford. That idea seemed to meet with approval. It was confirmed by the regional health authority in May 1988. A suitable site was then earmarked.

The community hospital was to comprise 24 beds for the elderly mentally infirm, plus 24 day places, 24 beds for the elderly, plus 30 day places, a 25-place mental illness day unit, 10 day care acute investigation beds, four out-patient suites, two X-ray rooms, plus a diagnostic unit, and a small pathology laboratory. That hospital would have filled a desperate need in my constituency.

To its eternal credit, Trafford health authority was so anxious to have the hospital that it offered to fund 39 per cent. of the capital cost by means of the disposal proceeds, plus a large cash injection. I thought that that would impress the regional health authority and show local commitment.

From the human angle, we are faced with the plight of the elderly not just in Trafford but throughout the country. People are living longer. We have a higher percentage of elderly people. That creates problems. In Trafford, there is an increasing population of over-75s and over-85s, particularly women living alone. It is estimated that in 1992 14,000 women over the age of 75 are living alone. The projection is that by the year 2001 that number will have increased to 15,290. This year there are 2,700 people over the age of 85, and the forecast is that by the year 2001 that number will have increased to 4,000.

In the 75-plus age group there is increasing dependency. Nearly 20 per cent. of those in the 85-plus age group are bedfast, 50 per cent. are unable fully to help themselves, and 20 per cent. of those over the age of 80 suffer from severe confusion. I hope that my hon. Friend will therefore appreciate the importance of a new community hospital that would provide much-needed facilities for my constituents.

The detailed feasibility study was completed in September 1990 so that a bid could be made for the 1993-94 capital programme. The total cost, inclusive of land, at that time was £11·7 million. At the April 1991 regional health authority meeting it was noted that the proposal was in line with the accepted regional health authority strategy but could not be funded to start in 1993-94. We were told that the scheme should be considered in the next rolling forward of the capital programme. Consequently, the scheme was resubmitted on 30 November 1991 in the hope that work could start in 1994-95.

During the winter of 1991-92 a great deal of discussion took place between the Trafford health authority and officers of the regional health authority. Consequently—and this gave us great hope—the plans were expanded to include an extra ward for the elderly, in line with the recommendations of the health advisory service. That increased the cost to £14·8 million.

South Trafford community hospital was included on a short list of six schemes for consideration by the regional health authority. A presentation of that scheme was given

[Sir Fergus Montgomery]

to the members of the regional health authority in mid-February. At the end of April we were given the bad news that our community hospital was not in the regional capital programme. That is not good enough. I should be failing in my duty if I were to let this go by without a protest. I give my hon. Friend fair warning that I shall badger the Department of Health and the regional health authority until I get fair treatment for the people who live in my constituency.

I have some statistics from the North Western regional health authority about the capital spending from 1980 to the present time. One column shows the capital investment per resident since 1980. In Preston district, capital investment per resident has amounted to £490, in north Manchester to £451, in central Manchester to £948, in Stockport to £86 and in Trafford to £98. Stockport at least has a major scheme in the current capital programme.

Consideration of the regional health authority capital scheme shows that since 1980 three districts have fared worst—Rochdale, Stockport and Trafford. Again, the Rochdale scheme has been given the go-ahead, but Trafford has the lowest overall investment in the north-west region. I think that Trafford has been shabbily treated and that south Trafford has been treated worse. If Trafford district health authority has not been given a fair deal, south Trafford is the Cinderella of the health service in our area.

The community hospital was intended to improve the quality of locally based community services. It would have provided excellent modern facilities for the elderly and for the elderly mentally infirm. It would have been a boon to carers in my constituency. Many people devote their lives to looking after their elderly relatives. The community hospital would have offered a place where elderly relatives could have been looked after while carers had a well-earned break. Carers could have been sure that their elderly relatives would be extremely well looked after while they were having their well-earned break.

As my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary will have deduced, it is a sorry tale that I have had to tell. For at least 15 years we have had a history of proposals and counter-proposals for rationalising hospital services in south Trafford. The imperative of providing an acceptable hospital environment for south Trafford's residents has been delayed far too long and I do not think that it can be delayed any longer. I therefore hope that my hon. Friend will at least give me some decent news—perhaps some cheering news. I hope that he will knock a few heads together in the Department of Health and the regional health authority. I warn him that we have been patient for long enough—perhaps we have been too patient and have not fought as hard as we should have—and we want no more words or promises. We want some action to ensure that south Trafford has fair hospital provision.

10.37 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Tim Yeo): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Altrincham and Sale (Sir F. Montgomery) for his kind welcome. He referred to the fact that this is my maiden Adjournment debate at the Department of Health, although I had the pleasure of answering 16 Adjournment debates during a brief sojourn at the Department of the Environment.

I am glad to have the opportunity of responding to my hon. Friend and I should like to begin by congratulating him on using this opportunity to express his heart-felt concern about Trafford health authority's proposal for a new hospital in south Trafford. I very much regret that his first Adjournment debate on the subject was as long ago as 1980. I appreciate from the sequence of events which he outlined how frustrating those 12 years have been for him and many of his constituents. It is good that he is back in the House to continue championing their interests, and I was particularly glad that last week saw some remarkable gains in the local council elections in his constituency.

The scheme is a high priority for the district. As my hon. Friend said, it involves the building of a community hospital on a green-field site to serve the needs of south Trafford. From what he said, it is clear that he has been attending to this issue for a long time and has been pursuing the interests of his constituents in this sphere. His concern is well recognised in the House.

The proposals for future hospital provision in south Trafford are the outcome of many years of debate and of much detailed analysis and hard work, some of which my hon. Friend mentioned. During that time, there has been a gradual change of emphasis, although it is true that the residents of Trafford have enjoyed considerable increases in the number and quality of health treatments. From 1982 to 1992, that has meant that the number of in-patient cases increased by nearly 11 per cent. overall. In the same period, day cases increased by 115 per cent. Waiting times for treatment in Trafford are as good as those experienced anywhere in the north-western region. Not only are there no people waiting more than two years, but there is no one waiting more than 12 months for treatment. There is an equally impressive achievement with regard to the cancellation of operations—in 1989-90, the latest year for which figures are available, only 1·1 per cent. of operations were cancelled, which is one of the lowest cancellation rates in England.

Sir Fergus Montgomery: The point that I have tried to make over the years is that people in my constituency have either to go to what is now called Trafford general hospital, which is in the north of Trafford, or to Wythenshawe, which is in Manchester. We are asking for some facilities in the south of the borough as they are desperately needed because our hospitals are small and tend to be very old and antiquated.

Mr. Yeo: I appreciate that point and I shall deal specifically with the proposal which has thus far been turned down by the regional health authority. Although I understand the thrust of my hon. Friend's intervention, I wanted to quote the figures because they are an eloquent testimony to the success of the Government's reforms of the health service and to the quality of the work of many health service employees in that district.

As my hon. Friend knows, in his part of the world there is a new £2 million maternity unit, a £2 million mental illness unit and a £4 million geriatric and physiotherapy unit, all of which are solid, practical achievements.

There are many other interesting community-based developments taking place in the district. For instance, the district health and family health services authorities have

jointly produced locality profiles for key areas in Trafford in need of improved health services. Those have been produced with the full involvement of the local authority, voluntary sector and community groups. Specific plans are being drawn up to make services more appropriate to the needs of people in these areas.

On the patients charter, I know that Trafford's patient charter action group is steadily improving its standards. For instance, it is committed to bringing the waiting time for treatment down to nine months. Communicating with patients is a high priority and a local consultant has developed a range of letters which explain the commonest 40 operations in layman's terms, offering advice and so on. I have an example which deals with the operation to repair a rectal prolapse. The example is comprehensive and easily understood. That is a demonstrable record of real achievement.

As my hon. Friend said, the focus of attention was originally the plan to have a new district general hospital in Altrincham. However, that focus began to change because far higher efficiency in providing modern medical treatment enabled existing hospitals to provide a more than adequate service. It was soon recognised that additional new acute beds could not be justified against a background of short stays in hospital and the more intensive use of medical staff and equipment, especially in view of the overprovision of acute beds in Manchester generally.

There is now no debate about extra acute beds because in 1988 an option appraisal by the district highlighted the need for a community hospital which would act as a referral centre for specialty services provided elsewhere. The community hospital plan was agreed by North Western regional health authority in May 1988. What we have is a full-blown proposal for a community hospital in Altrincham offering out-patient services, day care surgery and facilities for the elderly and the mentally ill. My hon. Friend described the facilities in detail. Clearly, it is desirable to replace existing facilities of outdated design with an integrated service. There is a clear objective that future hospital development in south Trafford should concentrate on improved provision for the elderly and mentally infirm.

So far, so good. There is agreement between us that the present proposal will be good for the residents of south Trafford. It is entirely understandable that the district wishes to provide the most modern facilities at the earliest opportunity. However, I am afraid that translating its proposals into reality has proved a complex process, and that has given rise to the concern expressed by my hon. Friend.

Although the Government place ever-increasing resources at the disposal of the national health service, those resources are finite, and priority has to be established between competing claims. For example, the demands for capital grossly exceed supply, notwithstanding the fact that this year total capital spending is expected to reach £2 billion for the first time.

Capital expenditure on hospital and community health services in North Western region rose by 49 per cent. in real terms over the period 1986-87 to 1990-91. During the same period, capital spending in Trafford rose by 265 per cent. The equivalent increase in capital spending in England over the same period was 21·5 per cent. Capital investment in North Western region will be about £124·5 million this year, compared with last year's allocation of £104 million.

North Western regional health authority, in common with other regions, has a difficult task—that of distilling local plans for rationalisation into some form of priority order. Given the development of health service provision in this country over many years, it will come as no great surprise to learn that most districts see the need to rationalise and re-cast the provision of services. That process is fundamental to a well-managed system and the achievement of increased efficiency. But some changes, however beneficial they may be, cannot be achieved overnight.

North Western region has made great strides in developing what is generally regarded as a fair and objective system to decide competing priorities. The planning guidance stresses the need to address service considerations, which have been summarised as: the need to achieve value for money; the need to keep services of proven value going; the need to "plug" service gaps; the need to ensure equal access to services and a "fair sharing" of resources; and the need to improve service quality.

I do not want to go into great detail on the allocation of capital in the north-west, because my hon. Friend will be well aware that since 1989 the authority has operated a three-year capital programme—one year being added by way of an annual roll-on. At its meeting on 28 April, the authority considered for approval major building projects for a start on site during 1994-95.

In the category covering more or less self-contained developments of existing district facilities, the total cost of eligible bids amounted to about £185 million at today's prices. Those bids were sifted by a group made up of representatives from medical, nursing, planning, finance, personnel and estates divisions. The exercise pruned the number of schemes for consideration down to six, costing about £109 million to complete.

South Trafford's community hospital was one of the six and had an estimated cost of £14·8 million. The authority could approve the allocation only of some £25 million, to be spent on three schemes, the highest cost being just over £10·5 million, for a first phase at Rochdale. My hon. Friend has seen the papers placed before the meeting, and I am sure that he agrees that all the schemes are eminently worth while. All were forcefully argued by their respective proponents.

As we all know, the authority decided not to include Trafford's proposals for start on site in 1994-95. The straightforward and unambiguous reason for that decision was that other submissions had a higher priority.

My hon. Friend has condemned previous ministerial responses as merely words, and I shall be especially careful about what I say now, so that I do not raise false hopes. It is inherent in such rolling programmes that schemes not included have only one year to wait before being eligible to be considered again. However, I understand my hon. Friend's disappointment and that of Trafford because this was their second successive disappointment. As my hon. Friend said, Trafford's bid for inclusion in 1993-94 was turned down in 1991.

In view of the train of events, I can well understand my hon. Friend's wish to seek an assurance that the region remains committed to the Trafford proposal. I can state categorically that its failure to secure funding in 1993-94 or 1994-95 does not imply that the RHA has withdrawn its

[Mr. Yeo]

support for the scheme. The region is firmly committed and I understand that the district will resubmit the proposal later this year.

I hope that my hon. Friend will understand why Ministers cannot intervene. The Government have aimed to set a framework of objectives and priorities within which local management must be allowed to manage. In terms of access to district services, I think that the responsibility lies fairly and squarely on the regional and district health authorities.

I appreciate that my hon. Friend may not be satisfied by what I have had to say. Indeed, I would be surprised if he were so satisfied. I welcome his intention to continue to make forceful representations in the House to Ministers and to the RHA. I am sure that that is the right strategy for him to pursue on behalf of his constituents. I must conclude, however, by referring again to the RHA's well-developed strategy to tackle capital developments within the region. It is difficult for it to establish priorities and difficult issues arise, but the region is best placed to tackle those issues and I hope that it will continue to do so with the interests of everyone within the area at heart.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at one minute past Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 14 May 1992

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

MERSEY DOCKS AND HARBOUR BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

Read the Third time, and passed.

ALLIANCE AND LEICESTER (GIROBANK) BILL *(By Order)*

Order for Second Reading read.

To be read a Second time on Tuesday 19 May.

BRITISH RAILWAYS (No. 4) BILL *(By Order)*

CROSSRAIL BILL *(By Order)*

EAST COAST MAIN LINE (SAFETY) BILL *(By Order)*

KING'S CROSS RAILWAYS (No. 2) BILL *(By Order)*

LONDON UNDERGROUND (GREEN PARK) BILL *(By Order)*

LONDON UNDERGROUND (JUBILEE) BILL *(By Order)*

Orders for Second Reading read.

To be read a Second time on Thursday 21 May.

Oral Answers to Questions

HOME DEPARTMENT

Crime, North Yorkshire

1. **Mr. Bayley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will describe what action he proposes to take to combat crime in North Yorkshire.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Charles Wardle): The North Yorkshire police have the resources to maintain a strong and effective police service. We have also encouraged the development of effective crime prevention schemes.

Mr. Bayley: Is the Minister aware that, according to the North Yorkshire chief constable's annual reports, the number of offences in the county in 1979 was 20,000, and falling, and that last year the number of recorded offences was 50,000, and rising? Is he aware that, under the last Labour Government, in five years Labour Home Secretaries gave North Yorkshire 151 additional police officers, whereas in the 13 years of Conservative Government the county has received only 46 additional police officers? Can the hon. Gentleman tell me of any other part of the police service that has had to deal with a 150 per cent. increase in workload with only a 4 per cent. increase in the number of officers? Finally, can he tell me when North Yorkshire will get the additional police officers that it so badly needs to prevent crime?

Mr. Wardle: The hon. Gentleman should beware of making comparisons on the basis of 1979. The average annual increase in reported offences in North Yorkshire was higher in the five years prior to 1979 than it has been since then. The number of police officers in North Yorkshire has risen to 1,391 and there are 447 civilians in post. Nationally, spending on the police has increased since 1979 by 74 per cent., net of inflation. What matters in combating crime is the way in which the police are deployed. That is a matter for the chief constable and the effectiveness of our crime prevention. There are nearly 2,200 neighbourhood watch schemes in North Yorkshire.

Mr. John Greenway: I warmly welcome my hon. Friend to his new responsibilities and warn him that the last junior Minister I so welcomed was my right hon. Friend the Chief Whip. Does he agree that if all police forces in Great Britain were run as effectively and efficiently as the North Yorkshire police, the fight against crime would be all the greater—and more efficent, too? Is he aware that this year the North Yorkshire police have concluded a three-year programme of investment in new telecommunications, computer and telephone equipment, which means that eight officers can now be released to outside duties? Will the flexibility to spend their money in the way that they wish be continued?

Mr. Wardle: I thank my hon. Friend for his first remarks. His knowledge of police matters, for which he is widely respected, is well known. He is absolutely right in what he says about the initiatives that have been taken by the North Yorkshire police. They have taken a number of initiatives and have worked with the local community on crime prevention, to good effect.

Prisons (Education)

2. **Mr. Spearing** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement concerning trends or plans he has for the volume of expenditure on adult education in Her Majesty's prisons.

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. Peter Lloyd): The Government's plans are set out in the White Paper, "Custody, Care and Justice". Payments to local education authorities for education services in prisons in 1992-93 are expected to total £29·9 million, a real increase on last year's expenditure of 8 per cent., following a similar increase last year on the year before.

Mr. Spearing: Although the Minister claims that there is an increase, can he comment on the authorities' reports that a decrease is also being planned? Are not prison sentences partly preventive, partly penal and partly remedial? If education contributes, as it surely will, to a constructive regime, does it not mean that repetition is avoided and further expenditure on the prison service is reduced? Therefore, would it not be better to spend a great deal more on education, if only to obtain the value for money about which the Minister is concerned?

Mr. Lloyd: I think that the hon. Gentleman had to adjust his question slightly. He probably read in the press that there had been an overall cut, but my answer showed that that was not the case. There has been an increase on last year and there were increases in the year before that and the year before that. As the hon. Gentleman suggested, we place education in a central position to equip prisoners for rejoining society as well as to improve the quality of their lives in prison.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: I welcome the increase in expenditure on prison education. When I was a prison visitor at Lancaster prison, far and away the most popular course was the literacy course, without which people could not—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Lloyd: Because of the laughter, I did not hear the end of my hon. Friend's question. I commend her on the good work that I know that she will have done as a prison visitor. We would probably have fewer problems in Lancaster prison if she could continue to combine her role as a prison visitor with that as Member of Parliament for Lancaster.

Miss Lestor: Will the Minister comment on the situation in Feltham young offenders institution, which I visited recently with my hon. Friend the hon. Member for Feltham and Heston (Mr. Keen). I was told—it was quite clear—that, despite the low level of literacy among many of the young men there, education classes and evening classes have all been cut and that there are only about 36 vocational training courses for 800 people. Feltham does not have the staff to maintain a continuing education programme to equip those young men for any sort of job when they come out of the establishment.

Mr. Lloyd: Feltham is one of those institutions where, although expenditure is among the highest for prisons, this year it is somewhat lower than it was last year because funds have been diverted to new prisons and other prisons which have not had a sufficient share of the allocation. I can only confirm what the hon. Lady is implying, which is that education, particularly literacy education, is extremely important for young offenders. It is essential that those who go into prison unable to read and write should leave being able to do so.

Mr. Dickens: Will my hon. Friend confirm that although the House and possibly the nation are delighted to hear about the tremendous expenditure on teaching prisoners various courses while in custody, we would all be much happier if we could be assured that at the top of the curriculum is a course to teach prisoners how to behave when they are back in society and how to be good citizens again?

Mr. Lloyd: That is the central objective of all prison regimes and I am sure that my hon. Friend will agree that his constituents will be much safer if released offenders have been equipped while in prison to lead a successful and effective life with a job that they can hold down.

Weapons

3. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what initiatives he proposes to take to reduce the carrying and use of knives and guns in London.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The Government have already strengthened controls on firearms and knives and we are keeping the position under close review. Enforcement of the law in London is a matter for the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis.

Mr. Hughes: Given that the Home Secretary is the police authority for London, will he take cognisance of the fact that robberies using firearms or pointed weapons, usually knives, have increased significantly over the past five years? In Southwark, both types of robbery have increased by more or less 80 per cent. Will the Minister seriously consider responding positively to an initiative that will be coming his way shortly from the police consultative group in Southwark for a proper campaign to persuade young people in particular that carrying firearms and knives is in neither society's nor their own interest?

Mr. Wardle: The hon. Gentleman is right to say that there has been an increase in armed robbery, but it is worth pointing out that only one fifth of 1 per cent. of all recorded offences in 1990 involved firearms. Any representations will be taken seriously, and the hon. Gentleman may know that a Home Office study has been commissioned into the source of firearms used in armed raids and robberies. He will also know that the Government have taken action through the Firearms (Amendment) Act 1988 and the amnesty on firearms in London that followed and have also made it an offence to carry a knife in public places without good reason.

Mr. Wilkinson: Even quiet residential parts of outer London are now, I will not say terrorised, but certainly subject to many more incidents of armed robbery. Local residents are deeply disquieted, as I am. Will my hon. Friend assure the House that penalties for armed robbery will be dramatically increased, because deterrents are clearly not adequate?

Mr. Wardle: My hon. Friend is right to say that it has been recognised that there is an increasing number of armed robberies. He should bear it in mind that the maximum penalty for possession of a firearm with intent

to endanger life or to resist arrest is life imprisonment, and it is also an offence for a person to have a bladed or sharply pointed weapon in a public place without good reason.

Mr. Randall: Is the Minister aware that the Criminal Justice Act 1988, which created new offences for these types of crimes, is not resulting in sufficient convictions because of the difficulty of obtaining adequate evidence so that people can be stopped on the grounds of reasonable suspicion? Is he also aware that there is no possibility of ever going back to the old sus-type laws for stopping and searching? What practical steps, therefore, will the Minister take to deal with the dilemma?

Mr. Wardle: The Criminal Justice Act 1988 provided stiffer penalties. The Government believe that police powers to stop and search under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 are adequate. They strike a balance between a constable's discretion to search and the protection of the citizen against arbitrary interference, which is extremely important.

Mr. Gale: This is my first opportunity to welcome my hon. Friend to the Dispatch Box. I suggest to him that the incidents of armed crime involving knives and guns have increased dramatically year on year since the abolition of capital punishment. Will he tell the House what further measures he and the Home Office intend to take to afford proper protection to the men and women of the police force who we require to enforce our law and every day to face men and women carrying guns and using them against them?

Mr. Wardle: I thank my hon. Friend for his first remark. On capital punishment, he will certainly be aware that its reintroduction is a matter for a free vote in Parliament, and it will no doubt arise again in the future.

The protection of the police was precisely the purpose of the Firearms (Amendment) Act 1988. It was also precisely the purpose of the amnesty that followed and of the initiatives about six months ago which resulted in the collection of about 1,100 dangerous knives and similar weapons. Another study is being undertaken to review policemen's protective clothing in view of possible attacks by people carrying knives or similar weapons.

Crime Prevention

4. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he next proposes to meet the Association of Chief Police Officers to discuss crime prevention.

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. Michael Jack): The Association of Chief Police Officers is actively involved in the field of crime prevention and my right hon. and learned Friend will be meeting the association at its conference in June.

Mr. Flynn: In welcoming the hon. Gentleman to his duties, I remind him of the fate of the previous Secretary of State who rightly received his just reward for a record in office which was truly criminal, having presided over record levels of crime—increases of 16 and 17 per cent? Will the new Ministers now resurrect the Morgan report, which was buried by the previous Secretary of State and which recommended that local authorities be empowered to deal with juvenile crime—to have the resources to deal with it—and to deal with the social causes of crime? Is that not a practical and more constructive way in which to approach the problem of rising crime?

Mr. Jack: I am glad that the hon. Gentleman mentioned the word "practical". I commend to him the document that I have here—"Practical Ways to Crack Crime"—which is one example of the many methods that the Government have pioneered to deal with crime prevention. We do not need to resurrect the Morgan report; we are already aware of local authorities' role in crime prevention and are already encouraging many of them to be at the centre of local initiatives. Last week, I took part in radio interviews to support one such excellent venture in Kettering.

Mr. Lawrence: My hon. Friend is aware that the more the Government do to prevent crime, the more the amount of crime appears to increase. Is he yet able to demonstrate —as he soon should be able to do—that the 100 neighbourhood watch schemes both reduce crime and lead to increased detection of crimes in the areas in which they operate?

Mr. Jack: I am grateful to my hon. and learned Friend for mentioning neighbourhood watch, as that gives me an opportunity to pay tribute to the many thousands of people who give so generously of their spare time to that excellent initiative—such as that in Kirkholt, near Rochdale, where a study has been carried out of an intensive neighbourhood watch operation which has resulted in a 75 per cent. reduction in recorded crime. Such schemes take their place alongside initiatives such as car crime prevention year—intended to tackle one third of all recorded crime. Much work is being done, but I take my hat off to the citizens who play an active part in those efforts.

Mr. Maginnis: When the Home Secretary next speaks to the Association of Chief Police Officers, will he concentrate everyone's thoughts on the need to rationalise the number of constabularies in Great Britain? The administrative demand on the police could then be proportionately reduced and the forces remaining would become more efficient so that they could put more police officers on the ground, where crimes occur. Might it not then be possible to reverse the dreadful decision made last week to place the gathering and collation of intelligence on terrorists in the hands of MI5 instead of maintaining police primacy, which is what ought to be done?

Mr. Jack: My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary, who is here beside me, will have noted the hon. Gentleman's comments. Last Friday, my right hon. and learned Friend announced to the House his policies on that matter. We are committed to providing 1,000 additional police officers. Putting them on the ground in the communities in which our constituents live is an important manifesto commitment. My right hon. and learned Friend made clear in a newspaper interview today his priorities on the efficient operation of the police force.

Mr. Butcher: Will my hon. Friend include in his discussions Chief Superintendent Jim Swingewood of Coventry city police? Is my hon. Friend aware that the recent disturbances in Coventry had much to do with drink-related and mindless vandalism and criminality? The criminals are well known to local residents, who are

heartily sick of having to tolerate them in their midst. In connection with crime prevention, and therefore with the prevention of potential copycat violence, have the press not a huge responsibility to report such incidents calmly and accurately?

Mr. Jack: My hon. Friend speaks with the authority of someone who knows his constituents and the problems of his area well. I take the opportunity to pay tribute to the Coventry police for the firm, strong, quick way in which they dealt with the incidents on the street. Those incidents are not tolerable, and involve many of the issues which the Government take seriously, especially the control of alcohol. I shall bear in mind my hon. Friend's perceptive comments in the development of future policies.

Mr. Hattersley: I congratulate the new Minister. He said that there was no need to resurrect the Morgan report, with the clear implication that that report was dead. In April the previous Home Secretary said that it was receiving active consideration. What is the position—has the report been abandoned or not?

Mr. Jack: I did not know that my previous answer had administered the last rites to the Morgan report. We are still studying and giving active consideration to the report. I wanted to ensure that the right hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friends understand that we do not deprecate the role of local authorities in fighting crime. I have sought to point out that they are already playing an important part along with many other agencies. The fight against crime involves all of us and I am pleased that some local authorities are playing their part positively in that respect.

Voting

5. **Mr. David Atkinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many registered electors did not vote in the recent general election; and what percentage this represents of the total number of registered electors.

9. **Mr. Barnes:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will produce a report on the state of electoral registration at the 1992 general election; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: There are more than 43·7 million people on the 1992 electoral register—the highest number of people ever registered in the United Kingdom, and representing over 95 per cent. of the estimated eligible population. Preliminary figures show that the total number of votes cast at the general election was about 33·6 million, so about 23 per cent. of electors on the register did not vote.

Mr. Atkinson: I congratulate my hon. Friend on his well-deserved promotion. Was it his impression of the general election that many more of our constituents failed to meet the deadline for applications for postal and proxy votes and were thus unable to vote on polling day because they were away on holiday? Can my hon. Friend confirm that the deadline was 16 days before polling day? Will he now enter discussions with the appropriate authorities to seek a more convenient arrangement under which electors can exercise their democratic rights?

Mr. Lloyd: My hon. Friend knows that the rules for postal votes were simplified some years ago. It is my impression that the new procedures were more frequently used in this election than before in that more people voted by post. I am well aware that in my constituency and, I am sure, in others there were complaints that people did not realise that they had to get their applications in on time. The deadline was 23 March, which was 13 or 17 days before the election, depending on whether one counts weekends. We were informed that that time was needed by the local authorities to process the applications, to check them, to send out the ballot papers, to have them back and to ensure that they could be included in the count.

We will have discussions with the local authorities and with the political parties on the lessons to be learnt from the election. I have no doubt that postal votes will be a significant part of those discussions.

Mr. Barnes: I object to the fact that two questions were linked together and that my question was not given an answer. An answer was given merely to the first question. My question asked whether the Home Office would be involved in a report about the state of the electoral register in the 1992 election. I should like an answer to that as well as to the supplementary question that I am about to put.

There is a sense in which most hon. Members represent rotten boroughs. At the previous election, 1·5 million people were missing from the electoral register, according to the Registrar-General and to reports by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys. That is a huge democratic deficit. What are the Government and Home Office going to do to correct that? Shall I have to use a private Member's Bill to deal with the matter myself?

Mr. Lloyd: I expect that the hon. Gentleman—I know that he takes an interest in the subject—knows that the OPCS is undertaking special research on the accuracy of the registers. It will have at its disposal the results of the 1991 census, so it is an especially good time to carry out such research. When we have the results, we shall decide what steps, if any, need to be taken. Our discussions about keeping up the register will, no doubt, be part of the inquest which, as I said earlier, we shall hold with the local authorities and with the political parties later this year. The methods used to get people on to the register are advertising and publicity, and there is also the research on and review of the practices of local authorities. Like the hon. Gentleman, we want everyone who is eligible to be on the register.

Mrs. Peacock: What directions are given to electoral registration officers to enable them to compile a fairly comprehensive and factually correct electoral register?

Mr. Lloyd: We provide a considerable amount of advice, but under the law it is up to the officers to do it. The main way is the form to be filled in that is delivered to every household. As there may be another supplementary question from the Opposition Benches, I must say that the community charge register has been very useful in some constituencies as an extra source of information for the electoral registration officer to discover where people may not have put themselves on the electoral register. For example, in the eight constituencies in Leeds, the local authority, using those means to update the register, added 26,000 to the electoral register last year.

Mr. Darling: I congratulate the Minister on managing to remain in the Home Office in the recent reshuffle and I welcome his undertaking to consider postal votes. Many

hon. Members believe that more time should be allowed for people to get postal votes. Is the Minister aware that the registers in some constituencies are grossly inaccurate? There were some cases of people being on the poll tax register, having paid their poll tax, but not on the electoral register. Does he accept that the Government must do far more to advertise the fact that the electoral register is compiled each autumn and encourage people to ensure that their names are on the electoral register so that they are not disenfranchised? Will he undertake to put a little more effort into advertising, in contrast to the half-hearted effort pursued by his predecessors?

Mr. Lloyd: We advertise every year; that amounted to some half a million pounds last year and it will be at least that sum this year. The most important task lies with the electoral registration officer to devise all means locally to ensure that everyone who should be on the register is on it and that those who should not be on it come off it.

Sir John Hannam: Is my hon. Friend aware that there are reports that many disabled people found that polling stations were still inaccessible? Will he consider carefully the suggestion that disabled people should be able to vote at a polling station that is accessible to them and not be unable to vote, as is the case at the moment?

Mr. Lloyd: I am not sure whether we would want necessarily to adopt my hon. Friend's solution. However, he raises a very important issue which must form part of the discussions that I have said are being carried out. A disabled person who is likely to find it difficult to gain access to a polling station is exactly the type of person who should apply for a postal vote.

Remand Prisoners

6. **Mr. Llwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to improve transport conditions and journey times for remand prisoners travelling from remand centres to courts in north Wales.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I have no plans to make changes to the current arrangements for the conveyance of prisoners to courts in north Wales, which are broadly similar to those in operation in other parts of the country.

Mr. Llwyd: As I have had numerous complaints from constituents and their families about seven-hour journeys to courts, often in inhumane conditions, will the Minister confirm that a remand centre is to be established in north Wales and that in the meantime decent transport facilities will be afforded to remand prisoners?

Mr. Lloyd: I cannot confirm or promise a remand centre, at least not at this point. However, the arrangements for transporting prisoners are well organised. If the hon. Gentleman has particular complaints and would like to see me about them, I should be glad to see him. There are long journeys in north Wales. However, on long journeys the rule is that there must be a stop at least every two hours so that prisoners can get out—*[Laughter.]*—together with their escorts, so that both may use the lavatory, have a drink and, if it is the appropriate time of the day, have a meal.

7. **Mr. Ainger:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he intends to end the remanding of juveniles into prison department establishments.

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): The Government are committed to ending juvenile prison remands as soon as enough local authority secure accommodation is available. We shall ensure that the extra places needed are provided as quickly as possible.

Mr. Ainger: Is the Secretary of State aware that it is almost two years since Phillip Knight from my constituency committed suicide in Swansea gaol at the age of 15 and that the Secretary of State's reply offers no hope to many juveniles currently on remand or in prison? Will he encourage his Department to introduce a scheme whereby we shall no longer see juvenile suicides in our prisons?

Mr. Clarke: I well remember that tragic case. Obviously, we must do everything possible to reduce the risk of repetitions of such cases when young people are held on remand. My answer referred to a specific scheme on which we have already embarked. Specific grants are available for local authorities to provide the necessary secure accommodation. We have already had discussions with the Department of Health. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health and I will ensure, if we possibly can, that buildings are designed and constructed. The money is provided specifically so that we can replace remand into prison for juveniles by 1995 at the latest.

Mr. Watts: Will my right hon. and learned Friend also bear it in mind that many crimes are committed by juveniles and that many reoffend while on remand? Will he bear in mind the importance of protecting law-abiding citizens from such offences, as well as taking into account the welfare of juveniles who need to be remanded in custody?

Mr. Clarke: I agree with my hon. Friend. There is an unfortunate necessity to remand in custody a comparatively small number of juvenile offenders. The Criminal Justice Act 1991 made it clear that the ground for such remand should be that there was a threat to the public. There are more than 1,000 such cases each year. We need to provide some additional local authority secure accommodation before we can bring to an end the unsuitable practice of remanding people to adult prisons.

Police Efficiency

8. **Mr. Mullin:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has for reviewing the efficiency of the police force; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I propose to keep the police service subject to a process of continuous review in order to ensure that it delivers an efficient and effective service.

Mr. Mullin: Is the Home Secretary aware that any plans that he has for extracting value for money from our police will be widely welcomed by people of all political persuasions? To start the ball rolling, may I draw his attention to a little racket that has been going on for some years whereby detectives employed by more than half the nation's police forces tour the nation's gaols persuading convicted felons to own up to offences on the unsolved book? They use that as a way of diminishing the crime rate. In Merseyside it accounts for 44 per cent. of all clear-ups.

The House will not be surprised to hear that the West Midlands is not far behind, with about 34 per cent. In my area, the figure stood at 29 per cent. until the new chief constable abolished it. Can the Secretary of State put a stop to this and use the funds that become available to put more policemen on the streets?

Mr. Clarke: I am delighted to hear that I shall have the support of the hon. Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin) in seeking value for money from the police force. I expected to have the support of most people involved and I have recently been rather startled to read accounts by journalists who have not met me and to be criticised by officials of the Police Federation who have not met me either about some of the things that I am supposed to be doing.

I will consider the particular point raised by the hon. Gentleman. I well remember such rumours in the courts many years ago, but I am not sure that they were substantiated in practice. It is always wise to treat clear-up figures and figures of recorded crime with a certain amount of scepticism. What matters is that security is given to the public by an efficient, effective and sympathetic police force.

Sir John Wheeler: My right hon. and learned Friend will be aware that substantial resources have been invested in our police system in the past 13 years. Will he give thought to improving the inspection arrangements for the constabularies, perhaps through the medium of an entirely new inspectorate arrangement under which reports are published on both efficiency and effectiveness of the use of resources and the deployment of police officers?

Mr. Clarke: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his reference to resources. The Government cannot be faulted on the level of resources that we have provided to the police force over the past 13 years. Obviously we must continue to provide the resources that are necessary to support the service in its important work. The inspectorate is an important element in ensuring that efficiency is sustained everywhere. I have already had discussions with the chief inspector of constabulary about ways in which the inspectorate might be strengthened. I shall certainly take on board my hon. Friend's helpful suggestions.

Mr. Sheerman: Does the Home Secretary realise that the Opposition have been calling for a more efficient police force for many years and that he will have our support if he tackles some of the real problems of the police force? Rather than blaming the police for the appalling rise in crime rates over the past 13 years, will he work with the progressive forces within the police force to bring about real change? May I give the right hon. and learned Gentleman a few suggestions for an agenda for change?

Madam Speaker: Order. This presents me with a golden opportunity of informing Members that this is Question Time, not a debate. There must be direct questions to the Home Secretary.

Mr. Sheerman: Will the Home Secretary put on the agenda for change stopping secret societies in all police authorities, decentralisation of management and real change in the inspection process?

Mr. Clarke: I am glad to hear that the hon. Gentleman is in favour of sustaining the efficiency of the police force and that it will be such a non-controversial process, bearing in mind that it is so widely welcomed on both sides of the House. I should regard it as an extraordinary claim if anybody tried to suggest that the police have been responsible for the increase in the crime rate in recent years. Our job is to support the police in their efforts to provide effective protection to the public against the increase in crime. I shall take on board the hon. Gentleman's interesting suggestions. As I said to my hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Sir J. Wheeler), strengthening the inspectorate could be, among other things, a quite important way of proceeding.

Parents' Accountability

10. **Mr. Nicholls:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on proposals to make parents more accountable for the behaviour of their children.

Mr. Jack: The Criminal Justice Act 1991 significantly strengthens courts' powers to involve parents when their children offend. These provisions will come into force on 1 October 1992.

Mr. Nicholls: Does my hon. Friend agree that when a person offends, responsibility for that offending lies not with the Government or society but with the criminal? Is it not entirely right that parents should be responsible for their children's misdeeds? Will my hon. Friend assure the House that the proposals set out in the Criminal Justice Act will ensure that parents are far more aware of their children's misdeeds?

Mr. Jack: I am most grateful to my hon. Friend for his question, which highlights one of the most important parts of the Criminal Justice Act. The courts will have powers to order parents to come into court both to support their children at that time and to listen to and learn of some of their misdemeanours. They will ultimately be subjected to the courts' power of binding over, which means that they will be fully involved in ensuring that their children do not recommit offences.

Victim Support

11. **Ms. Primarolo:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the provision of statutory funding for the expansion of Victim Support schemes.

Mr. Jack: Home Office funding for the national voluntary body which supports local schemes, Victim Support, has increased from £250,000 in 1986-87 to £7·25 million in the current financial year. These resources will enable Victim Support to extend the existing work of local schemes and develop further new services for victims who are witnesses in Crown courts.

Ms. Primarolo: As the Minister rightly said, this is funding for volunteers, although the funding co-ordinates the central administration. It is an area which needs considerable expansion at a time of rising crime. Even though the Government's funding has risen, many schemes are losing money because of capping and other financial restraints that confront local authorities, which are unable to make payments.

There is a desperate need to fund the support of victims in the Crown courts. The Government, and especially the

Prime Minister, go on about citizens charters, and perhaps they should include in them adequate funding of citizens who are victims and witnesses in court so that they can receive the support that they need.

Mr. Jack: I have some good news for the hon. Lady on two counts. First, the Government's policies that will bear down on the efficiency of local authorities should enable them all to be more generous to victim support schemes in future. Secondly, in the next financial year we are committed to raising resources for the Victim Support scheme to £8·3 million. That should help them in the expansion of the work to which the hon. Lady referred. One of the inhibiting factors that have been identified in extending this work has been the availability of suitable people. That is an area in which, perhaps, the hon. Lady could give encouragement.

Mr. Corbett: May I welcome the Minister to his new responsibilities? Will he confirm that a reason why there has had to be an increase in funding for Victim Support is that in the past 13 years the number of victims of crime has more than doubled? Is not the planned increase for the next few years inadequate for the job? Will he confirm that Victim Support must run from its grant the victim services in 83 Crown courts? Does he not believe that that bill should be more properly picked up by the Lord Chancellor?

Mr. Jack: We take our responsibilities in this area seriously. The hon. Gentleman did not refer, for example, to the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board, which has a budget just short of £150 million. That means that we provide substantial help to those who are the victims of crime. If he had listened throughout Question Time he would have heard my right hon. and learned Friend and hon. Friends talking about how we shall combat crime, especially violent crime.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. French:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 14 May.

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. French: Does my right hon. Friend agree that although it is desirable to have an easy flow of goods and people between countries, it is essential to maintain effective national border controls, not only as part of our fight against international crime and drug trafficking, but to preserve that extra security which we as an island nation have come to expect?

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend. The benefits that we see from the freedom of movement could easily be lost if we could not protect ourselves against terrorism, smuggling and illegal immigration. On border controls, the Government do not agree that article 8A requires the abolition of all controls on people at the Community's internal frontiers. It is our policy to control the entry of nationals at the point of arrival. That is the most effective way of control for an island nation, and our European partners must understand that.

Mr. Kinnock: Is the Prime Minister aware that today's rise in unemployment is the 24th consecutive monthly increase? Is he aware that during the past year unemployment has increased by over half a million and that unemployment among 18 to 24-year-olds has increased by more than 200,000? Against that background, does he think it right to continue cutting Government funding for training?

The Prime Minister: Any increase in unemployment is one too many. I accept that, and I agree with the right hon. Gentleman about it. The only way we shall create permanent jobs that will be sustained and will provide proper career opportunities is to have the return of confidence, the right levels of investment and the right economic background. That is what we are seeking to achieve. That is the right way to deal with unemployment in the short term, the medium term and the long term. As the right hon. Gentleman knows, we have one of the most substantial training schemes that this country has ever seen or any other country has ever seen.

Mr. Kinnock: Does not the Prime Minister yet accept that a critical part of any policy for future employment is a good, strong, continuing policy on training? The figures in the Government's White Paper on public expenditure —*[Interruption.]* The figures in the Government's own White Paper show that there is to be a continuing cut in employment training and youth training. There are 800,000 young people aged between 18 and 24 who are unemployed now. Is it not clear that the Government's message to them is no jobs, no training, no hope?

The Prime Minister: I do not believe that that is remotely accurate. On the substantive part of the right hon. Gentleman's question, training is improving all the time. More workers are qualified—up to 73 per cent.—more people are staying on at school for more skills and more firms are investing in training, the figure for which is now £20 billion. This Government have created 300,000 training places whereas the Labour Government created 700. Just a few weeks ago the British people were well aware of which party would put the nation back to work and they made their choice decisively.

Mr. Kinnock: Since the Prime Minister wishes to refer to it, the fact is that under the last Labour Government unemployment reached a maximum of 1·25 million. It is now well over double that. This Government have never managed to get unemployment down to that level. Why will he not face up to the problem of unemployment, accept his own figures and understand that the Conservatives have not only sabotaged employment in this country and lost 1 million jobs in the last two years, but are not providing employment training in the way that should be provided in any modern country, let alone one with 2·7 million unemployed people?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman should sometimes recollect that there never have been a Labour Government who did not push unemployment up dramatically. A higher proportion of our nation—70 per cent., a higher proportion than anywhere else—is in work. Our job creation record throughout the 1980s was better

than that of most European Community countries, providing over 2 million more jobs than in 1983. The right hon. Gentleman takes a selective view of the rest of the world. He ignores it when he talks of recession. He accepts it when he talks of unemployment. He might need a more consistent line if he becomes leader of the Socialist International.

Mr. David Evans: I congratulate the Prime Minister on his stunning victory at the general election. Will he take this opportunity to congratulate the people of Welwyn Hatfield on getting rid of a Labour administration after 13 years? Will he assure me that we shall not hold the next Conservative party conference in Sheffield and that we shall not close the conference in total darkness with fireworks going off? *[Interruption.]* They might all turn out to be damp squibs, as happened to the Labour party.

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend makes his own distinctive points in his own distinctive way, and I have no doubt that the voters of Welwyn Hatfield, in returning him, have seen him do precisely what they expected of him. In response to his direct question, I can certainly confirm that the next Conservative party conference will not be held in Sheffield.

Q2. **Mr. Wareing:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 14 May.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Wareing: Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that when his predecessor first entered the House, it was five months before she made her maiden speech and that, when she did, she introduced a Bill which opened up local authority meetings to the press and public? In view of the secrecy that presently surrounds the meetings of hospital trusts, will the right hon. Gentleman introduce legislation under which all management committee meetings are open to the press and public?

The Prime Minister: I have told the hon. Gentleman that the Chancellor of the Duchy is examining areas of government where it is possible to remove levels of secrecy. That has begun and will continue. We shall make the outcome known to Parliament in due course.

Mr. Bill Walker: When my right hon. Friend is carrying out his review, and is taking stock of the situation, of Scotland, will he bear it in mind that his leadership and the firm stand taken by him and the Secretary of State for Scotland against assemblies and parliaments in Edinburgh resulted in the splendid general election result and the subsequent splendid result at the district elections, in which Perth and Kinross district council was restored handsomely to Conservative control?

The Prime Minister: As my hon. Friend knows, I believe that the Union has ensured that Scotland plays a full part in the most stable political entity to be found anywhere in Europe. It has served the whole of the United Kingdom well. It has certainly served Scotland and England well. Indeed, as the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) said recently, Scotland is alive and flourishing. Indeed it is. We welcome that. It is alive and flourishing within the Union.

Mr. Ashdown: Does the Prime Minister realise that, despite his attacks on our proposals for a carbon tax during the election campaign, we now greatly welcome his conversion to the case for a carbon tax to tackle global warming? Does he accept that the European Commission's proposals are too timid and too conditional to attack that problem effectively, that the next response must come from the Americans and that he has a role in persuading the Americans to make that response?

The Prime Minister: There are many ways to deal with the problem of CO_2 and we still await the Commission's formal proposals. We cannot yet be certain what it will do. It is absolutely clear that it would make sense to adopt such a tax only if our major competitors in the world also did so, both for environmental reasons and because acting alone would harm competitiveness in this country and across Europe. I shall discuss with Japan and the United States what action might be taken, but I have no intention of prejudging what that action might be.

Mr. Brandreth: Did my right hon. Friend happen to see the punch-up in the Italian Parliament yesterday, when it was attempting to elect a new President? Does he see that as an example of the benefits of proportional representation or merely a dress rehearsal for the election of a new loser—so sorry—new leader of the Labour party?

The Prime Minister: I did not see that particular report, but I am aware of Italy's present difficulties as it tries to determine a new Government after an election that has split the political parties through using proportional representation.

Q3. **Mr. Janner:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 14 May.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. and learned Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Janner: Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that, in the midst of a viciously high level of crime, the Leicestershire police force has been forced to cut its budget for the current year by more than £1 million? Will he, therefore, please take this opportunity to deny reports that the Government are placing pressure on his right hon. and learned and reticent Friend the Home Secretary to cut central funding for police forces, because to do so would be irresponsible, dangerous and totally unacceptable?

The Prime Minister: Those who know my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary would not suggest that he is readily susceptible to pressure. He will be as concerned as the Government have been in recent years to ensure that the police force is equipped for its battle against crime.

Q4. **Mr. Carrington:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 14 May.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Carrington: Some pensioners and other people on low incomes in Fulham often struggle to pay their heating bills. Will my right hon. Friend, therefore, join me in warmly welcoming the 3 per cent. reduction in gas prices announced today? Does not that show that privatisation, if properly and effectively regulated, is to the benefit of everyone?

The Prime Minister: Yes, I welcome the 3 per cent. cut in prices that has been announced. It adds to the reductions in recent years since privatisation took effect and illustrates clearly the benefits of competition.

Q5. **Ms. Hoey:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 14 May.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Lady to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Ms. Hoey: Does the Prime Minister agree that even if every single empty property in local authority and private sector control were used for families, there would still be a huge shortage of affordable, rented housing? Will the Prime Minister tell the House simply how many affordable, rented homes he plans to build in the next Parliament?

The Prime Minister: It would be a great improvement if all those empty properties, largely in the ownership of Labour authorities, were made available for letting. It would also make a tremendous difference to the availability of property if the Labour party would remove its long-standing prejudices against the private sector, which discourage so many people from bringing private property into the market for letting.

Q6. **Mr. Hague:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 14 May.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Hague: Will my right hon. Friend join me in welcoming today's report that, in line with the patients charter, the General Medical Council is to propose the biggest changes in the regulation of doctors for 150 years? Will he also welcome yesterday's statement by the British Medical Association that, from now on, it wishes to work with the Government in implementing health reforms? Is not the increasing acceptance of the Government's health policies by the medical profession a vindication at last of the work that has been done in the past few years to ensure that the health service today is better funded, better managed and provides a better service to its patients than ever before?

The Prime Minister: I very much agree with my hon. Friend and with the statement made by the chairman of the British Medical Association. We now have a far better working relationship. As a party, we are looking ahead. Indeed, it is only the Labour party which fails to look ahead to see the changes, improvements and benefits taking place in the health service as a result of our funding and our reforms.

Business of the House

3.30 pm

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): Will the Leader of the House tell us the business for next week, please?

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton): Yes, Sir. The business for next week will be as follows:

MONDAY 18 MAY—Second Reading of the British Coal and British Rail (Transfer Proposals) Bill.

TUESDAY 19 MAY—Motion for the Spring Adjournment.

Second Reading of the Non-Domestic Rating Bill

Motion on the Customs Duties (ECSC) (Amendment No. 7) Order.

WEDNESDAY 20 MAY and THURSDAY 21 MAY—Second Reading of the European Communities (Amendment) Bill.

FRIDAY 22 MAY—Debates on the Adjournment.

Dr. Cunningham: When we debate the European Communities (Amendment) Bill next week, will the Prime Minister speak on behalf of the Government? Is it the Government's intention to seek the suspension of the 10 o'clock rule on the first day of debate? When Second Reading is concluded, I urge the Leader of the House to agree that the Bill should be considered in Committee of the whole House.

Will the right hon. Gentleman arrange for an early statement from the Secretary of State for Employment, not only because of the appalling further and very sad increases in unemployment announced today, but because of the apparent threat, highlighted in the *Financial Times* today, to the future of the training and enterprise councils throughout the United Kingdom? Is it not really tragic that, in view of the level of unemployment and the already inadequate provision of training facilities, the future of the TECs seems so heavily at risk?

Mr. Newton: First, I can confirm that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister will open the debate on the European Communities (Amendment) Bill next Wednesday. Secondly, it is proposed to move a motion to allow the debate to continue after 10 o'clock on the first day. Thirdly, I can confirm that it will be proposed that the Committee stage of the Bill be taken on the Floor of the House. I am sure that that will have the general assent of the House.

On the hon. Gentleman's second set of questions, he will have heard what my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said only a few minutes ago on training and on the unemployment figures. I shall draw the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment to the hon. Gentleman's remarks.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. It might be of assistance to the House if I said something at this stage about the conduct of business questions, about which I have been concerned for some time.

The purpose of these questions is not to make the speech that hon. Members might hope to make later, or to obtain an instant ministerial reply. That is not the purpose of business questions. The purpose is to ask for a debate and to state briefly why that debate should be granted. The Leader of the House should not be asked questions about House matters; those should be put to him during his own question time.

I feel very firmly that, in fairness to others, only one subject should be raised per question, so that I can call as many hon. Members as possible. In that way, I hope that both questions and answers will be briefer than they have been in the past. I hope, too, that the House will trust my judgment when I believe that it is time to move on to our next business.

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead): As Maxwell pensioners have lost, and are losing, their pensions, will the Leader of the House make room next week for a debate so that the Government can make their position clear?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman had an opportunity, as he will well recall, to raise these matters during the recent debate on the Loyal Address, and he received a response from my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security. He will have many opportunities next week, with debates on the Whitsun Adjournment and in other ways, to raise all sorts of matters.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): In the debate on Maastricht, how will we be able adequately to debate foreign policy questions? Does my right hon. Friend know when the treaty on foreign policy will be ratified under the Ponsonby rule? Is it the usual 21 days after it has been deposited on the Table of the House? If so, when does that period expire, and will we have a full debate at the same time as the opportunity to discuss the other contents of the Bill?

Mr. Newton: In response both to that question and to a point raised with you, Madam Speaker, yesterday afternoon by my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow), let me say that I have taken steps to examine the availability of relevant documents. My understanding is that all are available in the Vote Office, and I am taking further steps to ensure that adequate stocks are available to hon. Members.

Mr. Peter Hain (Neath): I refer the Leader of the House to early day motions 44 and 55.

[That this House, noting that the following 23 honourable and Right honourable Members for Torbay, Wanstead and Woodford, Dorset North, Harrogate, North West Norfolk, Holland with Boston, Upminster, Davyhulme, Romsey and Waterside, Epsom and Ewell, North Norfolk, Stroud, Fareham, Mid Bedfordshire, West Gloucestershire, Arundel, North Wiltshire, Colne Valley, Aldridge-Brownhills, Bosworth, Reading East, Westminster North, and Weston super Mare, are Lloyds names who have been in membership of syndicates which have suffered catastrophic losses totalling hundreds of millions of pounds, and could therefore face individual bankruptcy and disqualification, calls upon the President of the Board of Trade to institute a full public inquiry into insider dealing, financial mismanagement and corruption in Lloyds and to demand wholesale reform and independent regulation, bearing in mind that if even half these 23 colleagues of his are indeed declared bankrupt, the Government could lose its majority.]

Can he make time next week for an urgent debate on the crisis in the Lloyd's London insurance market? There is now clear evidence of insider dealing, fraud and financial mismanagement in Lloyd's. There is additional evidence that the council of Lloyd's, in discussion with the

Department of Trade and Industry, is involved in an attempt, using institutional finance, to bail out Lloyd's names, including those who are Members of Parliament. Why will not the Government have a proper public inquiry and a proper Government statement for debate in the House, or are you involved in a cover-up to protect your own majority?

Madam Speaker: Order. I deprecate some of the language used in the House by hon. Members. Questions can be couched in far better terms than that.

Mr. Newton: Your deprecation, Madam Speaker, enables me to avoid deprecating that suggestion myself. I reject the hon. Gentleman's suggestion entirely. As he knows, there are a number of inquiries going on, and it would not help to institute yet another one.

Mr. Ian Bruce (South Dorset): Could my right hon. Friend arrange for us to have an early debate on armed forces matters? I am sure that the House knows very well that, arising from the "Options for Change" exercise, large numbers of changes are to be looked at, including the possibility that operational sea training in my constituency will be moved to another base. It would be helpful if we could have an early debate on these matters before the summer recess.

Mr. Newton: I will draw that request to the attention of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence but I might also, on this occasion, fall back on something on which I may fall back again in the course of business questions today. It is that, next week, there is to be a three-hour debate on the motion for the Whitsun Adjournment, and a number of timed debates on the Friday, and that will give hon. Members on both sides of the House many opportunities to raise matters.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): Given that, in the week after next, there is a week's recess, can the Leader of the House tell us when, I hope in Government time, we shall have an important and necessary debate on the United Nations conference in Rio, the earth summit, which is starting at the beginning of June? Time for such a debate is running out. It should be held in Government time, but it is one that would be widely supported on both sides of the House.

Mr. Newton: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer that I have just given, but, furthermore, we have just had a six-day debate on the Loyal Address with a one-day debate on the environment.

Mr. James Kilfedder (North Down): Will the Leader of the House provide time next week for an urgent debate on the scandalous decision by the Eastern health board to close 70 beds in the Bangor, Ards and Ulster hospitals, in addition to massive and drastic cuts imposed on those hospitals in the past 18 months? This decision will be detrimental to the people of North Down and cause massive unemployment among nurses and other staff. Therefore, there is an urgent need for a full and lengthy debate.

Mr. Newton: I do not think that I can promise a full and lengthy debate on that, in addition to the business already arranged for next week. I shall, however, ensure that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland is made aware of what the hon. Gentleman has said.

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North): Does not the Leader of the House appreciate the critical and urgent nature of the problems facing contributors to the Maxwell pension schemes? Having contributed throughout their lives, some of those people have been told that their cheques will be stopped, and other schemes are to be wound up. Does not the right hon. Gentleman realise that the Government must make a statement next week, and tell us what lifeline they will offer people who are entirely blameless following a sorry and sordid episode?

Mr. Newton: As the hon. Gentleman probably knows, I am more than aware of the concerns and difficulties involved, having been Secretary of State for Social Security until about six weeks ago. I shall draw the attention of my right hon. Friend the current Secretary of State to what the hon. Gentleman has said.

Sir Michael Marshall (Arundel): Does my right hon. Friend recognise that, given the deadline in respect of commission interest in the proposed takeover of the Midland bank, the House urgently needs to know the Government's thinking? The matter affects not only trade and employment but, perhaps critically, many aspects of foreign policy and our relations with Hong Kong.

Mr. Newton: I note my hon. Friend's views. He will be aware, however, that my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade is advised on such matters by the Office of Fair Trading. It would therefore not be appropriate for me to comment.

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): The Leader of the House has said that documentation is already available for the debate on the European Communities (Amendment) Bill that is to take place on Wednesday and Thursday. I believe that we all have copies of the Maastricht treaty, which runs to 130-odd pages; but, as the right hon. Gentleman knows, most of its contents take the form of amendments to the earlier treaties, and it is therefore extremely difficult to follow. Will the right hon. Gentleman make it clear that he has accepted the suggestion that was taken up yesterday by the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen)—and, I believe, subscribed to by you, Madam Speaker—and ensure that a document of analysis, with legal interpretation, is also available?

Mr. Newton: I have already undertaken to ensure that all the relevant documents are available. I have a list of the available documents, and I shall try to ensure that it is appended to *Hansard's* report of the business statement. I did not read it out to the House because it would have taken rather a long time.

Sir James Spicer (Dorset, West): My right hon. Friend will be well aware of the unhappiness felt by most people about the bunching of spring bank holidays. Easter Monday is followed by the May bank holiday, and then almost immediately by Whitsun. Will my right hon. Friend give the House an early opportunity to discuss the matter, and perhaps to consider moving the wretched May day bank holiday to October?

Mr. Newton: Let me start by observing wrily that, in my experience, many people welcome all these bank holidays. Leaving that aside, however, I think that I have enough problems at present without staging a debate on bank holidays.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): I thank the Leader of the House for his reply to my right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore). Can he assure us, however, that the list to which he referred will include a copy of the treaty of Rome as it will be if the treaty of union is approved? Is he aware that, in a reply given to me on 11 May—it can be found in column 25 of *Hansard*—his hon. Friend the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, implied that he had a copy of the treaty of Rome as it would be? So far, however, it has not been published. Surely it is a very relevant and necessary document.

Mr. Newton: For most normal purposes of debate in any forum of which I have been part, when a document has been subject to amendment we have examined both the document concerned and the amendments; but I note what the hon. Gentleman has said about my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, and I shall try to establish the position with him.

Mr. Paul Marland (Gloucestershire, West): Lest there be any misunderstanding, let me remind the House that I am a name at Lloyd's. In a more sober mood, I too wish to ask for a debate on Lloyd's. It is becoming clearer every day that there is evidence of Lloyd's having breached the Lloyd's Act 1982, and, in so doing, ruining many investors in the Lloyd's market. Will my right hon. Friend reflect soberly on the matter, and consider the possibility of a full-scale debate?

Mr. Newton: I thought that my hon. Friend put his point in an entirely serious and responsible way. I shall respond similarly by saying that I shall reflect upon what he said and draw it to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry.

Mr. Robert Parry (Liverpool, Riverside): The Leader of the House will have seen early-day motion 40.

[That this House welcomes the book, To Encourage the Others, by David A. Yallop, calling for an independent public inquiry into the hanging of Derek Bentley in 1952; requests the Secretary of State for the Home Department to set up the inquiry as a matter of urgency; hopes that such a request will lead to a posthumous pardon; and feels that this will end a grave miscarriage of justice which leaves a permanent blot on the British judicial system—the hanging of an innocent man.]

It has been signed by 174 Members of all parties. This is the fourth Session in which I have tabled this motion. Will the Leader of the House ask his right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary to make an early statement in the House in order to explain why the Home Office appears to be dragging its feet on this matter?

Mr. Newton: The Home Secretary has just been answering questions, but I presume that the hon. Gentleman did not get the chance to ask him this one. My right hon. and learned Friend is giving this case very careful consideration, and he will reach a decision as soon as possible on whether he thinks that any action on his part is called for.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): Does my right hon. Friend accept that there is concern throughout the House about the appalling plight of those people who are going to inherit the poisonous legacy of that dreadful crook Maxwell? Can we please have a statement next week before the House rises?

Mr. Newton: I do not think that I can add to what I have already said, but I shall draw my hon. Friend's comments to the attention of my right hon. Friend.

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): May I draw the attention of the Leader of the House to early-day motion 20 and the amendment?

[That this House calls for the immediate establishment of the departmental select committees so that Parliament can exercise its constitutional duty to hold Government to account and scrutinise its activities; and calls upon the House to ensure that in the future the establishment of select committees within one month of an election should become the duty of the Speaker under standing orders.]

I urge the Leader of the House to work with the usual channels to have those Select Committees set up so that we can start working when we return here after the spring Adjournment.

Mr. Newton: I note what the hon. Gentleman says and the contents of the letter that he wrote to me recently about the self-same matter. I think that he will understand that at this moment I cannot add to what I said in the debate on the Gracious Speech last night.

Mr. Robert Adley (Christchurch): Regarding Monday's business, does my right hon. Friend agree that a politically driven timetable for the future of British Rail could have damaging consequences? As a matter of fact, can he tell me whether in parliamentary history there has ever been a case of a paving Bill for an industry being produced by a Government before the White Paper on the future of that industry had itself been produced?

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend was kind enough to intimate that he might ask a question along these lines. In the intervening three quarters of an hour, I have been unable to discover an answer to his question. If there is no precedent, all that I can say is that there has to be a first time for everything.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): In view of the confusion over the Maastricht debate, will the Leader of the House consider postponing it and having a debate instead on the three reports from the Select Committee on Members' Interests, which have now been published—in one case over six months ago? As the Leader of the House knows, they concern the financial involvement of Select Committee chairmen and chairwomen and the new registration rules for Members which are recommended to this House, including the declaration of Lloyd's syndicates.

If those reports are allowed to gather dust for much longer without being debated, the suspicion will inevitably be engendered that the Tory Government are allowing Tory Members of Parliament to line their pockets through moonlighting, by ignoring recommendations from an all-party Committee that the rules should be tightened up to stop that moonlighting and pocket lining.

Mr. Newton: I sometimes think that, whatever we debated and did, the hon. Gentleman would still think that

suspicion was being engendered. As for his question, I do not think that he will expect me to undertake to put off the debate on the European Communities (Amendment) Bill. I shall obviously consider the rest of what he said with a view to deciding whether there is any response that I can make—but certainly not next week.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): I know that the Government share the concern of many hon. Members that some of the powers in the treaty of union they would not wish the European institutions to have. However, the Government say that we are protected by the principle of subsidiarity, which is in the treaty of union. This is a very important issue. Would it be possible for the Attorney-General to make a full statement to the House, before we debate the treaty, on the effect of the principle of subsidiarity and what it means? Furthermore, would it be possible for him to bring with him an opinion from a judge of the European Court of Justice, just to see whether he would have the same thing to say as the Attorney-General?

Mr. Newton: I shall draw my hon. Friend's comments to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary and my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General.

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): Will the Leader of the House make time for an urgent debate on the rising levels of crime in, I think, every hon. Member's constituency? If he finds time for that debate, will he ask his right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary to explain why, when I have raised the issue in the House before, I have been assured by Ministers that there was access to inner-city initiatives to fight crime and to the urban fund, yet my constituency has been excluded from both?

Mr. Newton: I will take note of those comments and pass on appropriately the hon. Lady's wish to see Halifax included in the safer cities programme, which is helping a considerable number of places. Apart from that, I am beginning to feel as if I am being treated by the frustrated as an extension of Home Office Question Time.

Mr. John Townend (Bridlington): When will proposals be brought before us to implement the recommendations of the Jopling Committee on the future workings of the House?

Mr. Newton: I think that my hon. Friend knows—he certainly will if he was able to listen to my remarks last night in the debate on the Address—that we think that the first step is a debate in the new Parliament on the report as a whole. I hope to arrange time for that not too long after the recess.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Will the Leader of the House arrange for a debate on early-day motion 17 which relates to lady Kurdish hunger strikers?

[That this House recognises the right of those fleeing political persecution to safety; further recognises their right to family re-union; notes that 62 Kurdish-Alevi asylum seekers who arrived in Britain in 1989 from Turkey have been on hunger strike since 1st May for the right of family re-union after the determination of their application; and accordingly calls upon the Home Secretary urgently to review these cases and bring an end to the misery of these divided families.]

They are at present on hunger strike around London demanding the right of family reunion. They want their families to come from Turkey where they are suffering great danger. If this issue is not dealt with quickly, further suffering will occur. It is an urgent matter and I ask the Leader of the House to make some appropriate arrangements for the issue to be debated and to ask the Home Secretary to examine the cases urgently so that those poor people can come to this country and live in safety.

Mr. Newton: We are, as I think the hon. Gentleman knows, willing to consider representations in the cases of the 62 hunger strikers referred to. I shall ensure that the attention of my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary is drawn to the hon. Gentleman's remarks.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Will my right hon. Friend arrange a debate next week on the growing practice of hospitals charging for parking by visitors and others? That now includes Ealing hospital, where a charge of £10 for over six hours is to be levied. Could the debate be arranged so that I can ask a question about Ealing and ensure that there and elsewhere there is special free parking for those visiting people in intensive care and other vital categories, while not defending those who park in hospital car parks for their own purposes?

Mr. Newton: I imagine that my hon. Friend has taken up this matter with Ealing health authority. I shall ensure that it is drawn to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health. My hon. Friend may wish to raise this matter during one of the opportunities next week.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): When the Leader of the House sees his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security, will he press upon him the necessity for an early statement next week on the plight of the Maxwell pensioners, bearing in mind that, in one Maxwell-owned company, 70 per cent. of the pension is being lost? There is desperate hardship and anxiety among those adversely affected by the dishonesty and crooked behaviour of Maxwell. I hope that it will be possible for such a statement to be made before the House rises for the recess because of the continuing hardship and anxiety of those to whom I have referred.

Mr. Newton: Once again, I cannot add to what I said earlier. However, I shall add the hon. Gentleman to the list of those whose representations I shall draw to the attention of my right hon. Friend.

Sir Anthony Grant (Cambridgeshire, South-West): Would it be possible, perhaps next week, or now if necessary, to place on record the appreciation of hon. Members on both sides of the House of the great service rendered to the House by the right hon. Member for Doncaster, Central (Mr. Walker) as Chairman of Ways and Means? His work has been appreciated by all hon. Members.

Mr. Newton: I am very grateful to my hon. Friend. I should perhaps say that I sought to pay tribute to the right hon. Gentleman last night at the beginning of my speech on the Address and I was struck by the warmth with which my remarks in that respect—although not in all others—were treated by the House.

Mr. Clive Betts (Sheffield, Attercliffe): May I request the Leader of the House—following his previous reply—to

[Mr. Clive Betts]

ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry to make a statement to the House on the proposed takeover of Midland bank by either Lloyds or the Hongkong and Shanghai bank? It is important not only to the bank's ordinary high street customers but to small businesses which want competition in loans and lending. It is also very important to many of my constituents who work at Midland bank's headquarters in Sheffield and who are unsure about their futures.

Mr. Newton: I shall indeed draw those remarks to my right hon. Friend's attention.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): Following the question asked by the hon. Member for Belfast, South (Rev. Martin Smyth), could the Leader of the House make a statement next week about the reappointment of the Select Committees? It is outrageous that rumours are going around that the Select Committees will not be established until October. They cost about £50,000 a week, and it would therefore cost the House more than £1 million if they were not re-established until October. They do very important work on the House's behalf.

Mr. Newton: As my hon. Friend is no doubt aware, I adverted to the matter in my speech last night in the debate on the Address, as did my opposite number, the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham). We both made it absolutely clear that we hope that the Select Committees will be set up without undue delay.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Will the Leader of the House tell the President of the Board of Trade that it is high time he came here to the Dispatch Box to explain his conduct regarding Olympia and York and his dealings with it? That firm, which is £12 billion in debt, is just like the Maxwell empire of yesteryear, running from bank to bank to keep its head above water. Through the President of the Board of Trade and the Secretary of State for the Environment, the Government are bailing it out. Instead of using £100 million to bail out a squalid company, they should be using the money to build houses for the homeless.

Mr. Newton: I do not think that I can promise the hon. Gentleman that I shall talk to my right hon. Friend in precisely those terms, but I shall draw his attention to what has been said.

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives): Just in case my right hon. Friend has not got the mood of the House, may I underline all the pleas for a statement on the Maxwell affair? He himself came before the Select Committee to give evidence several weeks ago and he knows the questions that are uppermost in the minds of those of us who serve on the Committee. One of those questions involves the plight of a particular group of pensioners, those who worked for, and in some cases still work, for British International Helicopters, which was sold into the clutches of Maxwell when the Government refused to endorse a management buy-out of the British Airways helicopter division. Therefore, the Government have a special responsibility to those pensioners. Will my right hon. Friend acknowledge that and do something about it?

Mr. Newton: Noted, of course. That enables me to add one word on the matter, which is that the Government will —rightly—be responding to the Select Committee's report in due course.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): Will the Leader of the House arrange for the Home Secretary to make a statement next week on the future organisation and funding of the United Kingdom Immigrants Advisory Service? As the Leader of the House will know, UKIAS provides advice and representation for some of the most vulnerable people in our communities—including divided families—and it also employs a number of people in offices throughout the country. Will he ensure that no final decisions are taken on funding by the Home Office unless and until the Home Secretary has consulted the House?

Mr. Newton: I am sure that my right hon. Friend will take careful note of the hon. Gentleman's views as expressed in the last moment or two.

[The following documents relating to the Treaty on European Union should be available in the Vote Office for the Second Reading debate on the European Communities (Amendment) Bill:

Treaty of Rome, as amended by the Single European Act (Cm 455);

Treaty on European Union (Cm 1934);

Foreign Affairs Committee Report on "Europe After Maastricht", Volumes I and II (Report and Evidence: HC 223);

Observations by the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on the FAC Report "Europe After Maastricht" (Cm 1965);

White Paper on Developments in the European Community, July-December 1991 (Cm 1857);

White Paper on Development in the European Community, January-June 1991 (Cm 1657);

Report by House of Commons Select Committee on European Legislation on the 1991-1992 Session, including an analysis of the Treaty on European Union by the Committee's Legal Adviser (to be published by HMSO on 14 May: HC 24-xv).

Third Report from the Health Committee on the European Community and Health Policy. (HC 180);

Minutes of Evidence taken before the Home Affairs Committee on 5, 12 and 26 February 1992 on Migration Control at the External Borders of the European Community. (HC 215);

Minutes of Evidence taken before the Treasury and Civil Service Committee on Economic and Monetary Union. (HC 285);

Fourth Special Report from the Treasury and Civil Service Committee on European Community Finances. (HC 334);

European Communities Act, 1972;

European Communities (Amendment) Act, 1986;

European Parliamentary Elections Act, 1978.]

Adjournment Debates

Madam Speaker: I need to remind the House that, on the motion for the Adjournment of the House on Friday 22 May, up to eight hon. Members may raise with Ministers subjects of their choice. Applications should

reach my office by 10pm on Monday next. The ballot will be held on Tuesday morning, and the results made known as soon as possible thereafter.

Local Government Finance (England)

3.59 pm

The Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Michael Howard): With permission, Madam Speaker, I should like to make a statement about local government finance and community charge capping in England.

Local authorities have now set their budgets and charges for 1992-93. The vast majority of budgets are at sensible levels reflecting what charge payers and the country can afford.

More than 400 authorities have budgeted within or very close to the limits implied by the provisional capping criteria announced last autumn by my right hon. Friend, the Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine). This outcome clearly demonstrates that my right hon. Friend was more than justified in his belief that authorities would find his provisional criteria manageable.

In overall terms, the total of local authority budgets is about 1 per cent. over the amount for which we made provision in our settlement, and the average headline charge is £282, with the average amount of charge actually met by charge payers being less than £200. This result is in no small part a tribute to the good sense and responsibility of local government.

I have carefully considered authorities' budgets. In the light of these budgets and all other relevant considerations, I have now decided my capping principles—that is, the criteria in accordance with which I must designate authorities for capping.

The principles I have today adopted give effect, with one modification, to the provisional criteria announced last autumn. This modification is that I have included a de minimis proviso. This will avoid designation in cases where the reduction which could be secured by capping would be less than £1·50 per adult.

I have decided that the de minimis principle will be appropriate this year, having regard to a number of considerations. Those considerations include the provisional criteria, the budgets which all authorities have in the event set—bearing in mind that in the great majority of cases they reflect what charge payers and the country can afford—the scale of reductions in budgets, and the costs of rebilling and associated expenses which, but for this principle, would be required. It should not be assumed that in any future year we would judge such a de minimis principle to be appropriate.

On the basis of those principles, 10 authorities are to be designated: Basildon, Cheltenham, Gloucester, Gloucestershire, Greenwich, Hillingdon, Lambeth, Langbaurgh, Middlesbrough and Warwickshire.

For each of those 10 authorities I also propose caps —that is, the level to which we propose authorities should reduce their budgets. I have made available in the Vote Office, and shall be printing in the *Official Report*, a table setting out my principles and showing for each designated authority the cap that I propose and the budget reductions implied by it. In each case, on the basis of all the information currently available to me, I am satisfied that my proposals are reasonable and appropriate in all the circumstances of the individual authorities concerned, and that my proposed reductions are achievable this year. The reductions in charge range from £58 for Basildon to £3 for Gloucester.

[Mr. Michael Howard]

Authorities now have 28 days in which to tell me whether they accept the amount proposed. They can also challenge my proposal, suggesting an alternative figure together with reasons for it. In such circumstances, it is open to me to set the final cap at a higher, lower or, indeed, the same level as the one I originally proposed. If an authority does not accept my proposed cap I have to set the final cap by order, a draft of which must be approved by the House.

Within 21 days of the final caps having been set, the authorities must set new lower budgets reflecting their caps which feed through to lower charges. How long the process takes depends in part on how authorities respond to my proposals, but I expect that by the end of June or early July all authorities will have set new budgets leading to reduced charges.

We and local government generally can rightly find satisfaction in the sensible and prudent way in which the vast majority of authorities have budgeted. But a few authorities are still failing to act responsibly. Parliament has given me powers that enable me both to secure as necessary the expenditure restraint by local authorities needed to meet our wider economic goals and to protect all charge payers against excessive budgeting. My decisions today reinforce our strategy of expenditure control, and will benefit about 1·8 million charge payers.

Following is the table:

Community charge capping 1992-93
Table of designated authorities and proposed caps

Column 1	*Column 2*	*Column 3*	*Column 4*		*Column 5*	*Column 6*	*Column 7*
Authority	*1992-93 budget*	*Proposed cap for 1992-93*	*Proposed reduction*		*Proposed cap change on 1991-92 budget*	*Original average community charges for 1992-93*	*Community charge reduction implied by proposed cap*
	(£ million)	*(£ million)*	*(£ million)*	*(Per cent.)*	*(Per cent.)*	*(£)*	*(£)*
Absolute Excessiveness							
Basildon	27·01	20·15	6·86	25·4	−8·8	361	58
Langbaurgh	18·50	16·50	2·00	10·8	5·8	376	18
Middlesbrough	21·60	20·20	1·40	6·5	0·0	353	14
Excessive Increase							
Cheltenham	10·84	9·91	0·93	8·6	6·6	330	12
Gloucester	10·34	10·15	0·19	1·9	10·3	310	3
Gloucestershire	327·80	317·91	9·89	3·0	6·5	279–347	25
Greenwich	228·81	220·04	8·77	3·8	3·3	287	56
Hillingdon	167·14	166·27	0·87	0·5	10·3	295	5
Lambeth	333·20	328·79	4·41	1·3	5·7	449	23
Warwickshire	299·76	292·99	6·77	2·3	6·5	290–353	19

Notes:

A. Designation is on the basis of the following criteria:

1. any increase of more than 6½ per cent. over the previous year's budget is an excessive increase if it gives rise to a budget over SSA;
2. any increase of more than 4½ per cent. over the previous year's budget is an excessive increase if it gives rise to a budget of over 5 per cent. above SSA;
3. any increase of more than 2½ per cent. over the previous year's budget is an excessive increase if it gives rise to a budget of over 10 per cent. above SSA;
4. any budget more than 12½ per cent. above SSA is excessive save that an authority will not be designated if:
   (a) its budget is 30 per cent. or less above SSA and is a cash freeze or reduction on its 1991-92 budget
   (b) its budget is 60 per cent. or less above SSA and at least 5 per cent. below its 1991-92 budget
   (c) its budget is at least 10 per cent. below its 1991-92 budget
5. if the excess in an authority's budget over the above criteria is less than the equivalent of £1·50 per adult that authority is not designated.

That criteria for inner London boroughs are the same as for other classes of authority save that for the purposes of comparison the amount of inner London education grant is deducted from budgets.

B. Column 1 of the table lists those authorities designated since their budgets are excessive (criterion 4 above) or represent an excessive increase over the previous year (criteria 1 to 3 above).

C. Column 2 shows 1992-93 budgets set by the designated authorities.

D. Column 3 shows the proposed caps for 1992-93.

E. Column 4 sets out the reductions in budgets implied by the proposed caps both in terms of cash and percentage.

F. Column 5 shows the percentage change from the 1991-92 budget to the proposed cap.

G. Column 6 lists the original average community charge or charges in the area of each designated authority for 1992-93.

H. Column 7 shows the reductions in community charges implied by each proposed cap.

Mr. David Blunkett (Sheffield, Brightside): This sorry statement is an admission of failure and a capitulation to those who believe that centralised Government should take precedence over democracy. The delay in delivering this sorry statement has already meant confusion and financial loss, and it makes it very difficult for councils to exercise their rights in appealing in the way that the Secretary of State spelled out this afternoon.

Will the Secretary of State acknowledge that not one of his predecessors agreed with capping as a solution to the future relationship between local and central Government? Will he acknowledge that his immediate predecessor condemned capping as

"an act of centralised power outside our experience . . . On those grounds alone, it should be resisted"?

Will the Secretary of State confirm his own words when he spoke as Minister with responsibility for local government when the capping regime was introduced for the poll tax? When introducing the legislation he said:

"We have made it clear on more than one occasion that we see the capping power introduced in the clause as a reserve measure . . . It is important that there should be such a reserve power . . . to protect the charge payers of an area against extreme cases of extravagant and irresponsible local authorities.—[*Official Report*, 25 April 1988; Vol. 132, c. 51.]

Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman confirm to us this afternoon that he believes that the criteria of extravagance and irresponsibility can be applied to Conservative-controlled Warwickshire, to Conservative-controlled Hillingdon, to the people of Gloucestershire or to the city of Gloucester whose residents will save a staggering £3 a year as a result of the actions of central Government? Will the Secretary of State tell us whether he agrees with himself, whether he agrees with his predecessor or whether he agrees with the unknown Secretary of State who believes that authorities such as Warwickshire and Hillingdon are profligate and extravagant?

Will the Secretary of State acknowledge that this is the eighth year of capping and that the Government are still abusing local authorities as though they and not the Government were responsible for high bills and reduced services? Will he explain to the House why the people of Warwickshire, Gloucestershire, Greenwich and Hillingdon should not choose the level and range of education provision for their children and of the social services provided for the elderly and for disabled people in their area?

Why should people not be left to exercise their own responsibility, to determine the opportunities available to them and to have a real chance of partnership between governed and governing—a partnership between local and central Government based on diversity, pluralism and respect for democracy? We in the Labour party accept the verdict of the people. Why will the Conservative party and the Government not do the same at local level?

On what criteria has the Secretary of State the right to determine what should happen at local level when the standard spending assessments are universally acknowledged to be flawed, when the national non-domestic rate is determined centrally, when 86 per cent. of spending is directed by central Government and when the remaining 14 per cent., as we can see this afternoon, is fixed through the capping process by a Government heady with victory and contemptuous of dissent?

Why should district councils across the country have been allocated an increase of 50 per cent. in their standard spending assessments when a council such as Middlesbrough, which has been capped this afternoon, has had a standstill budget over the past two years? No wonder people regard this capping regime and this afternoon's announcement as a discredited act by a Government who have no other means than central power to determine what they do for the people of this country.

Does the Secretary of State not agree that this is another bad day for democracy and another example of intolerance, of elective dictatorship and of the Government determined to have their own way over the wishes of local people? The losers are not the councils to be capped this afternoon, but the communities whose services will be cut.

Mr. Howard: The hon. Gentleman engaged in the usual ritualistic condemnation of capping that we always hear from the Opposition. However, that carries no conviction. If capping is anathema to Opposition Members, why did they propose during the general election campaign a cap on the revenue-raising powers of the Scottish Assembly about which they were so keen? Where is the logic in proposing a cap on the Scottish Assembly but no cap on local authorities? If the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) or any other Opposition Members want to attack our proposals, perhaps they will explain that incomprehensible inconsistency in the Labour party's attitude.

The only consistent theme to emerge from the remarks of the hon. Member for Brightside—a consistent theme also in the remarks of all Opposition Members—was that the Opposition display no concern about the need to control public spending. Local authorities spend about £60 billion a year. Any Government worthy of the name must be concerned that local profligacy is curbed. That message was clearly endorsed by the electorate on 9 April.

Basildon's proposed budget for 1992-93 is 114 per cent. above its standard spending assessment. Langbaurgh's is 52 per cent. above. Cheltenham proposed an increase of 16·6 per cent. over last year and Gloucester a 12·4 per cent. increase. Those budgets were excessive by any standard.

Two things are crystal clear: first, almost all local authorities have responded sensibly and responsibly to our guidelines; secondly, Conservative councils continue to deliver far better value for money than Labour or Liberal Democrat controlled councils. The average community charge in Conservative-controlled London boroughs was £86 lower than in Labour-controlled boroughs. In the metropolitan and non-metropolitan districts the average difference was £54. Those figures speak for themselves. That is why the Labour party suffered such a crushing defeat on 7 May and that is why the words of the hon. Member for Brightside sound so hollow.

Mr. Michael Shersby (Uxbridge): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that Hillingdon is £1 million over the cappling limit because it has had to spend £936,000 this year caring for unaccompanied child refugees from Eritrea, Angola, Uganda and elsewhere? Those children come into Heathrow, are abandoned there and fall into the care of Hillingdon. The cost of that operation is not met by the standard spending assessment. Is my right hon. and learned Friend further aware that Hillingdon has reduced expenditure by £30 million since May 1990 and has reduced the number of staff by 1,400? Will he kindly tell the House on what basis Hillingdon can appeal and over what period? Will he assure me that he will give the most careful and sympathetic consideration to a very difficult human problem?

Mr. Howard: I certainly understand my hon. Friend's concerns. We have sought to take into account all relevant circumstances in dealing with Hillingdon's budget. I give my hon. Friend the assurance that he seeks and will consider very carefully any representations made to me by Hillingdon. The council has 28 days in which to make representations to me and I will give any such representations the most careful consideration.

Mr. Bill Olner (Nuneaton): Has the Secretary of State taken into account the views of independent accountants and auditors who described my county as one of the most

[Mr. Bill Olner]

efficient in Britain? Why has he not taken into account the thousands of constituents who have written to him expressing concern about education, social services and all the other services that Warwickshire provides, including fire and rescue and the police services, which are under great threat? They are underfunded and have been told so by the Home Office. Why has he not taken those views into account? Why does not he agree that Warwickshire's standard spending assessment and the capping formula are flawed and work to Warwickshire's disadvantage? Warwickshire is a Tory-controlled authority, guaranteed to be one of the meanest in the country, yet it is still being capped. Why?

Mr. Howard: I have sought to take into account all the relevant factors affecting Warwickshire. Indeed, we changed the SSA for Warwickshire for this year to reflect some of the points that were put to us by the county council. The county council benefited from the changes which we made to the methodology. The effect of the cap that I propose will be to reduce the average community charge for the residents of Warwickshire by £19 a year. If the hon. Gentleman cared about the interests of his constituents, I should have thought that he would pay some attention to that proposed reduction. I shall, of course, carefully consider any representations made to me by Warwickshire. It has 28 days in which to decide how it wishes to respond to my proposals. I shall listen to what it has to say with great interest.

Mr. Olner: But what about services?

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Peter Bottomley (Eltham): Will my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that, if he did not bring in a cap, each charge payer in Greenwich would have to pay virtually 25 per cent. more? Is he aware that only one council in the country has been capped every single time since Greenwich put its rate up by 59 per cent. in one year in 1983? Would my right hon. and learned Friend be willing to consider meeting a deputation from all parties to discuss the standard spending assessment, which is an outstanding problem for Greenwich? Will he also accept that most charge payers will welcome this news and wish that Greenwich would get on and make those who are not paying the community charge pay up so that those who pay do not have to pay for those who do not?

Mr. Howard: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his remarks. My proposals for this year would produce a £56 saving on the average community charge paid by the residents of Greenwich. That would be over and above the total of £74 which capping has saved the average charge payer in Greenwich in the past two years. I can certainly confirm that I shall consider carefully any representations made to me on behalf of Greenwich. I shall be happy to meet the deputation proposed by my hon. Friend.

Mr. Alfred Morris (Manchester, Wythenshawe): Is the Secretary of State aware that local authority leaders of all political persuasions now complain that they are no longer able fully to discharge their legal duties to disabled persons under sections 1 and 2 of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1972? Is not this a deeply serious matter both legally and in social policy terms? What does this afternoon's statement do to meet that complaint?.

Mr. Howard: This is a matter for the priorities which local authorities attach to the relevant demands which they have to meet from their budgets. That is something with which they are familiar and anyone who has been elected to office is familiar. Any responsible office holder has to make difficult decisions of that nature. I am satisfied that the proposals that I have made today are appropriate, reasonable and achievable, but, as I have said, I am prepared to consider any representations that are made to me by any of the affected authorities.

Mr. Paul Marland (Gloucestershire, West): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that the huge overspending of Gloucestershire county council is as a result of the profligacy of the Liberal and Labour coalition? Whenever——

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): But the Conservatives run Gloucestershire.

Mr. Marland: The hon. Gentleman is wrong. The overspending was historic when the Liberals were in charge with Labour party back-up. They gave the Labour party a slush fund with which to back its special projects. It is as a result of that profligacy that Gloucestershire county council finds itself in serious difficulties. When the Liberal leader of Gloucestershire county council was warned by Mr. Cockcroft, the treasurer of the county council, of the overspending, he waved it aside. In effect, he said, "We are not interested in this. We shall go ahead with this spending anyhow."

May I welcome my right hon. and learned Friend's determination to cap Gloucestershire? During the election campaign many of my constituents were begging me to ensure that the county council was charge-capped.

Mr. Howard: I am very grateful to my hon. Friend. I am sure that he is absolutely right in his description of the way in which my proposals are likely to be greeted in Gloucestershire. The effect of my proposals would be to reduce the average community charge for the residents of Gloucestershire by £25, which I believe they will warmly welcome. I believe also that they are convinced that they can have adequate services and good value for money at the lower levels that I propose.

Mr. Mike O'Brien (Warwickshire, North): Bearing in mind that Warwickshire has one of the lowest expenditures per pupil on education of all the counties and that Her Majesty's inspectors of both the fire service and the police force have expressed their concern about the low expenditure on those services, how would the Secretary of State advise Conservative county councillors to deal with the problems of underfunding? He has virtually disowned them as overspenders and said that he will cut the amount of money that they have. Has he not brought into ridicule the policy of poll tax capping which was brought forward by the Government?

Mr. Howard: The hon. Gentleman's points are entirely misconceived. No doubt the first reaction that he would have if I tried to tell the leaders of Warwickshire county council how to spend their money would be to claim that I was interfering with local government and taking over their responsibilities. That is what would be said. I am

announcing the appropriate discharge of the responsibilities of central Government. Central Government's role in these matters is to control overall public expenditure and to protect the community charge payer. That is the purpose of the proposals that I am putting forward. As I have said, I shall be prepared to listen to anything that Warwickshire county council may put to me over the next 28 days or beyond, and to take into account in making my final decisions any further factors that it thinks are relevant.

Mr. Terry Dicks (Hayes and Harlington): In support of the comments made by my hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby), I must say that the Secretary of State's approach to Hillingdon is disgraceful to say the least. When he suggests that the authority is acting irresponsibly, along with the others, that is an insult to my Conservative colleagues on the council, who have made substantial savings over a period. I ask my right hon. and learned Friend to withdraw that comment, a blanket comment which included my friends on the council. Does he not realise that with Heathrow in Hillingdon, and in my constituency, there is no choice but to pick up these children? During the election campaign many people suggested on their doorsteps that we should send the children back or leave them there. My right hon. and learned Friend must understand that unless he takes an understanding view of a problem that is not Hillingdon's but which involves it because of the airport—it is a national problem—he will have a fight on his hands with myself and my colleagues on the Hillingdon council.

Mr. Howard: I understand the seriousness of the concerns which my hon. Friend has expressed, in common with my hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby). We have sought to take into account all relevant factors that affect Hillingdon. I shall listen with great care to anything that my hon. Friend the Member for Hayes and Harlington (Mr. Dicks) or Hillingdon council may say, and ensure that we give proper weight to all the relevant circumstances. However, my right hon. Friend the Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine), the then Secretary of State for the Environment, set out some clear criteria, which were known to all local authorities when they came to set their budgets for 1992-93. The criteria were known to Hillingdon as they were known to other local authorities. I regret that Hillingdon was not able to comply with the criteria and I shall pay careful attention to any representations that it wishes to make.

Mr. Nigel Jones (Cheltenham): Does the Secretary of State agree that his statement affects councils across the political spectrum, takes away local accountability and imposes central diktat? Does he recognise the arbitrary nature of the formula, which has brought low-spending authorities such as Gloucestershire into capping? That is illustrated, for example, by the fact that boundary changes made to Cheltenham last year have not been taken into account. Will he promise the House that he will be genuinely open to persuasion over the next four weeks by all the councils that are affected, and that any formula for next year will only be one that has been agreed by him and the local authority associations?

Mr. Howard: I can certainly give the hon. Gentleman the assurance that he seeks. I shall be genuinely open-minded about representations made to me on these matters. He is wrong to suggest that the boundary changes that affected Cheltenham were not taken into account in my decision. We made full allowance for the boundary change in our calculations. It was my duty to protect community charge payers in Cheltenham, as in Gloucestershire generally, but I shall listen to any representations that Cheltenham or Gloucestershire wish to put to me in the next few weeks.

Mr. Alan Howarth (Stratford-on-Avon): Does my right hon. and learned Friend recognise that in Warwickshire we have full regard for the need for economy in public finances and that Warwickshire county council has run its affairs stringently? Does he accept that any formula designed to apply across the country as a whole is bound to be broad-brush and will throw up anomalies? Will he, therefore, on appeal look carefully and, indeed, sympathetically at the case for relaxing the cap on Warwickshire? Will he also look at the application of the formula and, in particular, the area cost factor and the additional educational needs element in it, which have operated powerfully to the detriment of Warwickshire?

Mr. Howard: Again, I can give my hon. Friend the assurance that he seeks. The whole purpose of the process that this statement puts in train is to enable the affected authorities to bring to my attention any factor that they think I may have overlooked or to which they think I may have given insufficient weight. Last year, we made a number of changes from the original proposals in response to representations of that kind. I shall listen carefully to all the representations that are made to me, including representations from Warwickshire in particular.

Mr. John Fraser (Norwood): Before the Secretary of State smiles like a busy undertaker, may I remind him that in Lambeth it was the Tory party which had a resounding defeat? Although it is the second most deprived borough and has the highest poll tax bills in the country, does he realise that the effect of capping for the sake of about 50p a week will be only to throw many poll tax payers into confusion, because they have received their payment books already, and make it much more difficult to collect the poll tax, thereby creating greater financial problems for the future? It is bound to lead to a cut in services, particularly worryingly in education. Is it not, therefore, better to leave matters as they are, because the long-term costs of this capping will be to increase costs and make it much more difficult to get money in to spend on council services?

Mr. Howard: The hon. Gentleman might also have mentioned that Lambeth receives from central funding £1,628 per adult towards the cost of local services—the sixth highest in the country and £200 per adult more than neighbouring Wandsworth. If Lambeth could manage its affairs efficiently and collected the money it was owed, there would be no need for charge payers to be faced yet again with the highest community charge. I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman dismisses the reduction of £23 in the average community charge in Lambeth, which would be the result of these proposals. Community charge payers in Lambeth will regard it as a significant advantage.

Mr. David Amess (Basildon): Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the sensational local election results in Basildon, with swings of between 20 and 50 per cent. towards the Conservatives, showed that the residents

[Mr. David Amess]

were sick and tired of a rotten, high-spending, inefficient, socialist council and wanted sensible services and a low community charge? Will my right hon. and learned Friend accept my gratitude that that is what my constituents will now get?

Mr. Howard: I am delighted to have this opportunity to congratulate my hon. Friend and the councillors in the area that he represents on their astounding and spectacular victory on 7 May. I have put forward proposals for Basildon's budget for this year. I am confident that in future years, the new council of Basildon will adopt a very different and much more responsible attitude to these matters than its predecessor has done.

Mr. John Austin-Walker (Woolwich): Is the Secretary of State aware that there is all-party agreement on Greenwich council that the standard spending assessment formula treats Greenwich most unfairly? Will he comment on the situation in relation to the allocation per child on the children's services which gives Greenwich £39 per child and Wandsworth £209 per child? Will he also comment on the reduction that would come to Greenwich poll tax payers if they received grant in the generous way that it is received in Wandsworth? Would he and the Secretary of State for Education be prepared to come to Greenwich to meet parents and other residents and ask them directly whether they feel that Greenwich council spends too much on schools and adult education?

Mr. Howard: Greenwich is receiving £1,433 per adult from central funding in 1992-93, which is a rise of 5·1 per cent. on the previous year's figure. As for the SSA, the hon. Gentleman will have heard my response to my hon. Friend the Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley). I am prepared to consider, in the context put forward by my hon. Friend, representations that may be made to me about the SSA for Greenwich.

Mr. Roger Knapman (Stroud): I congratulate my right hon. and learned Friend on the great care and consideration he has shown before reaching decisions on these complex matters. Is he aware that in Gloucestershire, Conservative councillors and council officers produced a detailed budget showing that they could manage well within the existing record budget, and that only Liberal and Labour councillors there wanted to spend £10 million more? What effect would that have had on those on lower and fixed incomes?

Mr. Howard: I confess that I was not aware of what my hon. Friend just said, though it does not surprise me. It is a characteristic of the difference between Conservative local government and local government controlled by the other parties. I cannot give a figure in answer to the question that my hon. Friend asked, but the proposals that I have put forward today would reduce the average community charge in Gloucestershire by £25. I am sure that that would be welcomed by my hon. Friend's constituents.

Ms. Kate Hoey (Vauxhall): I and other hon. Members representing Lambeth are disappointed that the Secretary of State has not taken into consideration any of the remarkable improvements that have occurred in the borough's administration and in the delivery of services during the past year. It is indeed sad that no recognition has been given to those improvements. Is the right hon. and learned Gentleman aware that an all-community delegation will be anxious to come and see him to put Lambeth's case? Will he give a commitment now that he will see not just the leader and members of the council but a grouping of various people, including the churches and local police, who wish to see him to put Lambeth's case?

Mr. Howard: The representations that we shall be examining carefully will not in any way be limited to those from local authorities or councillors. If other interested bodies and groups wish to put points to us, we shall look at them with great care, give them full account and take them fully into consideration before reaching our final conclusion.

Mr. Douglas French (Gloucester): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that his announcement this afternoon will be welcomed by my constituents in the city of Gloucester, in so far as it relates to overspending by Gloucestershire county council? In the general election they voted decisively against Labour and Liberal policies, of which the overspending on Gloucestershire county council is a prime example. May I reserve judgment on his decision relating to Gloucester city council, in relation to which there may be some special factors which he should take into consideration?

Mr. Howard: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for what he said about Gloucestershire. I understand that he wishes to reflect on the position in Gloucester. If he can convince me that there are special considerations which fall properly to be taken into account, I shall listen carefully to what he says.

Ms. Marjorie Mowlam (Redcar): Will the Minister accept that a central problem facing Langbaurgh council over the years has been the way in which the SSA has been worked out, in that it has worked to the detriment of the council, to the point at which we no longer have any reserves left? He has assured the House that, on appeal, he will look at the way in which the SSA is worked out. If that is not the case, will he explain what will be the position? If he willing to look at how the standard spending assessment is worked out for specific councils, will he explain why he is suddenly prepared to do so when all-party delegations have approached his predecessors on the matter for the past six years and been refused?

Mr. Howard: I repeat that I shall take into account all relevant considerations in deciding whether I should modify the proposals that I have made today. I look forward to hearing from the hon. Lady and Langbaurgh council on the matters that they consider relevant. I understand the concern in many areas about aspects of those matters, which is why it is important that we have, as part of our process, a procedure that enables those representations to be made and requires them to be taken fully into account. That is what I shall be doing.

Mr. Geoffrey Clifton-Brown (Cirencester and Tewkesbury): I am grateful for my right hon. and learned Friend's announcement that Gloucestershire county council's budget will be reduced by the huge figure of £10 million. Does he agree that the charge reduction of £25

will lift a huge, unnecessary burden from my constituents in Cirencester and Tewkesbury, particularly those on fixed and low incomes?

Mr. Howard: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. One of the functions of central Government is to intervene where necessary to protect charge[illegible]yers. That is why we have kept a capping power and why I have put forward those proposals today. My hon. Friend's remarks truly speak for his constituents.

Mr. Clive Betts (Sheffield, Attercliffe): First, I presume that the Secretary of State is aware that the standard spending assessments that form part of his capping criteria are based on 1981 census data. Is he really telling the House that it is the act of a rational Government to determine the services to be provided to people in those 10 authorities on the basis of data collected 11 years ago?

Secondly, bearing in mind that two of the poll tax reductions are £3 and £5 a head, can the Secretary of State assure us that in all cases the savings to those councils and their poll tax payers will be greater than the cost of rebilling?

Mr. Howard: It is the act of a rational Government to make such decisions on the best information available to them. That is what we have done, but if any local authority or other interested party has better or more up-to-date information which they wish to draw to our attention, we shall look at it. That is the purpose of the process that begins with today's statement. Naturally, we have sought to take into account all relevant and up-to-date information leading up to my announcement today. On the hon. Gentleman's second point, the cost of rebilling in the authorities to which he referred will not exceed the reduction in the size of the budget resulting from my proposals. That is one of the factors which we have considered and which has entered our decision-making process. The hon. Gentleman's assertion is not borne out by the facts.

Mr. James Pawsey (Rugby and Kenilworth): I thank my right hon. and learned Friend for his statement. Will he confirm that Warwickshire is being kept at [illegible]3 million, which represents a £6 million shortfall on the budget? Is he aware that if the cap is not lifted, it will have a strong adverse effect on the services offered by Warwickshire county council? Does my right hon. and learned Friend further agree that the real problem in Warwickshire is not a spendthrift local authority, because Warwickshire is careful, but the way in which the SSA operates? Can he assure the House that we can look forward to a reform of the SSA?

Mr. Howard: The proposed cap for Warwickshire is a fraction under £293 million. We keep the standard spending assessment constantly under review. We reviewed it last year and made certain changes to the methodology, from which Warwickshire benefited. We shall continue to keep it under review and I look forward to hearing any representations that my hon. Friend may wish to make on those problems.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): If votes were to follow voices, the Government's overall majority would be down to about three. That is obvious from listening to the comments of the Conservative Members from Warwickshire. The capping system will never fit in any circumstances because of the fiddled formula for standard spending assessments. One of the greatest fiddles is the provision for enhanced population, which in some cases is a reduced population. If an area is a seaside resort, if there is a racecourse there, or if there is any other reason why people move there, the funding is increased because of the way that the formula is operated.

In north-east Derbyshire, where people have to move to Sheffield, Chesterfield or the Markham pit area to find work, the formula used means that the central Government grant is cut. We should stop the fiddle that affects Derbyshire county council, North-East Derbyshire council and other district councils in Derbyshire. I hope that some Conservative Member will speak on behalf of them.

Mr. Howard: There is no question of any fiddling in the standard spending assessment. It is a realistic attempt to reflect the different circumstances of different local authorities for the purpose of assessing Government grant. Labour Members always used to criticise the Government for reducing the proportion of spending on local government services that came from central Government. We have now substantially increased that provision, but the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) this afternoon criticised us for doing that. Labour Members really need to sort themselves out and introduce an element of consistency into their approach to these matters.

Mrs. Edwina Currie (Derbyshire, South): Is it not true that not a single Derbyshire council, whether county or district, has taken the risk of being capped this year? They have learnt the lesson of two years ago when the county was capped by the then Secretary of State and the council had its fingers burnt.

What advice would my right hon. and learned Friend give to the teachers of Derbyshire who once again face redundancies in large numbers because of the county council's policy to keep the price of school meals at the same level as it was 11 years ago?

Mr. Howard: My hon. Friend is absolutely right on her first point. The very fact that the number of authorities to be capped under our proposals is as few as 10 shows the extent to which our policies have succeeded. We set out the clear criteria in advance and the vast majority of authorities took careful note and ensured that their budgets complied with them.

On my hon. Friend's second point, I well understand the grievances that many residents of Derbyshire rightly have about the behaviour of Derbyshire county council. Their remedy lies in the ballot box and it will not be very long before they have an opportunity to make their views clearly known in that way.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): On many occasions since 1981, the people of Derbyshire have had the opportunity to use the ballot box. In 1981, they ousted the Tory group in Matlock. At the following election, the Labour party increased its majority, and at the following election it had another massive majority. At the last election, the two Tory Members of Parliament who are always calling for the sacking of teachers, home helps and everybody in sight who has to work for a living had their majorities cut——

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is capable of asking questions and I am sure that he is going to do so straight away.

Mr. Skinner: Is the Secretary of State aware that the Conservative hon. Members for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) and for Amber Valley (Mr. Oppenheim), who are always spouting in here, had their majorities cut by 4,000 and 8,000 votes?

Mr. Howard: For the second time in two days, I must refresh the hon. Gentleman's memory. I seem to recall —and I am sure that he remembers—the confident predictions that were made by Labour Members before the last election that neither of my hon. Friends would be with us after the general election. They are both here, they are both well, and they will both continue to speak for the people of Derbyshire for many, many years to come.

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim (Amber Valley): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that the only people whom we want sacked in Derbyshire are the Labour hangers-on, such as the chairman of Derbyshire Labour party and a bunch of ex-Labour councillors who have been given well-paid jobs on the county council by the Labour leader? On the two occasions on which the former Labour leader of the county council stood for election in Amber Valley —which was supposed to be a safe Labour seat—he was trounced, once by a majority of 9,500.

Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that Derbyshire county council persists in wasting more than £15,000 a year with its policy of pegging school meals at 1981 price levels? That does not even help the children of the poorest families because they get free school meals. Is he further aware that, if capped, the council could make reasonable savings? The people of Derbyshire, with the exception of a few diehards in the Labour party, would welcome capping. Will my right hon. and learned Friend give extra special consideration to capping Derbyshire—that is, if it is not abolished in the meantime?

Mr. Howard: I understand the force that lies behind my hon. Friend's remarks. He and my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) are the authentic voices of Derbyshire and they are sitting here today on behalf of the people of Derbyshire. Their voices will be recognised over the next few months and in the county council elections next year, which we await with confident expectation.

Mr. William O'Brien (Normanton): I hope that the Secretary of State will take note of the sincere appeals made to him by some Conservative Members about the capping announced in his appalling statement. Will he also note that there is no such thing as standard assessment of spending in local government? Each local authority has its own problems, so to say that there is a standard spending assessment for each authority is misleading and wrong. The right hon. and learned Gentleman should accept that standard spending assessments do not work. He should note what has been said by his colleagues this afternoon and cancel his statement.

Mr. Howard: I am not aware that any of my hon. Friends have asked me to cancel my statement; nor am I aware that any of them attacked the concept of capping. I shall take careful note of what they said and, indeed, of what Labour Members said. I shall certainly give careful consideration to all representations made to me on this matter.

In criticising standard spending assessments, the hon. Gentleman should bear it in mind that as long as we accept that it is appropriate for central Government to make a substantial contribution to the costs of local government services—and I understand that that is common ground across the House—there will have to be a system by which that central Government contribution is allocated. We are never likely to arrive at a system that gains universal acclaim and enthusiasm in all quarters. That is impossible because of the nature of the process.

We shall continue to keep SSAs under review. I shall listen carefully to all representations, but I believe that my statement and the proposals that I put before the House will be widely welcomed as a serious contribution to the objectives of keeping general public spending under control and of protecting community charge payers in the areas that I propose to designate.

Statutory Instruments, &c.

Madam Speaker: With permission, I will put together the next two motions on the Order Paper.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(3) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

BUILDING SOCIETIES

That the draft Building Societies (Member States) Order 1992 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

NATIONAL CURRICULUM

That the draft Education (National Curriculum) (Foundation Subjects at Key Stage 4) Order 1992 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Wood.]*

Question agreed to.

Ways and Means

[Relevant documents: European Community Document No. 10212/91 and COR2, the Commission's Annual Economic Report 1991-92.]

Madam Speaker: It may be for the convenience of hon. Members if I remind them that the debate will take place on the first motion—amendment of the law. The remaining motions will be put at the end of the debate and they will be decided forthwith.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Can you clarify the position on the first resolution, which affects the provision of zero rating of tax and refunding of tax? Those subjects are covered in the Maastricht agreement, the treaty on which is being debated, as you know, next Wednesday and Thursday. In view of the provisions in the Maastricht agreement, if, by some unfortunate chance, the Bill is passed, will amending legislation have to be incorporated in the Bill to effect the provisions that we are discussing today?

Madam Speaker: That is a rather hypothetical question. In due course, it will become a matter for Ministers, but the provisions in front of us are in order, and we must now proceed with them.

4.49 pm

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Stephen Dorrell): I beg to move,

1. Amendment of the law

That it is expedient to amend the law with respect to the National Debt and the public revenue and to make further provision in connection with finance; but this Resolution does not extend to the making of any amendment with respect to value added tax so as to provide—

(a) for zero-rating or exempting any supply;
(b) for refunding any amount of tax;
(c) for varying the rate of that tax otherwise than in relation to all supplies and importations; or
(d) for relief other than relief applying to goods of whatever description or services of whatever description.

It is nice to hear that the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) is confident that we shall secure our resolutions and that the Bill about which he is so worried will be passed.

I begin by paying tribute to my predecessor, Francis Maude. This is the season of maiden speeches and, in that tradition, it is right to record the considerable achievements of my predecessor not only in tax, which is the interest of the House in this debate, but in a much wider range of responsibilities that he had in his time in the Treasury. He was the Minister responsible for the management of the citizens charter programme and for the introduction of the principles of better government which were enshrined in the White Paper "Competing for Quality". The themes for which he was responsible as Financial Secretary are themes to which we shall return repeatedly during this Parliament and during the rest of the decade. I am sure that I speak for all my right hon. and hon. Friends when I say that I very much hope that Francis will soon be back among us playing his distinguished part in our debates.

The resolutions before the House represent the practical demonstration and putting into effect of another of the major themes of the 1990s. They are not new: they are a continuation of the Budget debate, because almost all of them were on the Order Paper during the Budget debate before the general election campaign and were resolutions on which that debate took place. The debate did not stop when Parliament was dissolved. Rather, it moved into the country. No one can doubt that the debates in the general election campaign were a continuation of the Budget debate that had started in the House.

Furthermore, the issues on which the Budget debate centred were at the heart of the election campaign. The electorate were given a clear choice between the resolutions set down after my right hon. Friend's Budget, based on his commitment to a continued programme of reduction and rationalisation of the tax burden, and the programme espoused and articulated by the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith). They represented an increase in the tax burden of £7 billion, and that was only the first instalment of what he hoped to introduce.

Given that clear choice, the decision of the electorate was decisive. The best news for my right hon. and hon. Friends would be if the Labour party elected the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East as its leader, because we are already preparing the ground for a rerun of that debate in four or five years time. I am sure that my right hon. and hon. Friends look forward with keen anticipation to continuing that debate in the country.

I thought that the House might find it helpful if I took some time to explain how the resolutions fit with the measures announced by my right hon. Friend in his Budget on 10 March. The principal purpose of the resolutions is to complete the implementation of my right hon. Friend's Budget measures. If the House approves them, we shall publish a Finance Bill containing the necessary provisions on 20 May.

In the Finance Act passed before the general election, the House approved many of my right hon. Friend's most important Budget measures. That Act confirmed the Budget changes in the rates of excise duties, VAT penalties and the halving of car tax. It cut income tax from 25 per cent. to 20 per cent. on the first £2,000 of taxable income. It also overrode statutory indexation to keep unchanged the levels of the married couples allowance for under-65s and the basic rate limit. The Act also introduced monthly payments on account for the largest VAT payers.

A number of other Budget measures did not require Finance Bill legislation. For example, the income tax personal and age-related allowances rose in line with inflation under the statutory indexation provisions. Indexation of the income tax car scale charges and the VAT registration threshold were implemented by Treasury orders. So too were changes to the VAT treatment of cars, and extensions of VAT reliefs for charities.

Thus, many of the most significant Budget measures are, I am pleased to say, already law. We are now proceeding with all the remaining tax changes announced in the Budget and before.

Perhaps the most important of the Budget measures left to be implemented are the changes to business rates. These will be worth £480 million in 1992-93 and £590 million in 1993-94 to businesses throughout the United Kingdom. They will be implemented by the Local Government (Finance) Bill announced in the Gracious Speech.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): The hon. Gentleman will know that in Scotland there is continuing dissatisfaction among businesses about the fact that business rates paid by Scottish-based businesses and those

[Mr. Malcolm Bruce]

paid by businesses based in England differ to the tune of £450 million a year. The Government have said that they intend to close that gap. When will that be achieved? How long will it take? When can businesses in Scotland be expected to compete on an equal footing with comparable businesses in the rest of the United Kingdom?

Mr. Dorrell: When the Government give commitments to change the tax system, we implement them in good order and in reasonable time. I cannot give the hon. Gentleman a clear end date to the process that he is probing, but I am sure that, if a commitment has been given, it will be carried out.

Of the Budget measures left to the Finance Bill, perhaps the most significant are changes to inheritance tax. Although resolutions are not required, the Bill will, as my right hon. Friend promised on Budget day, raise the threshold for inheritance tax to £150,000, backdated to 10 March. It will also free most business assets from inheritance tax altogether, fulfilling another promise made by my right hon. Friend in his Budget.

So much for the provisions of the forthcoming Finance Bill that do not require resolutions. The resolutions that are the subject of today's debate fall into four categories. First, some prepare the way for the implementation of those Budget measures that have not yet become law. Secondly, some provide the changes to the indirect tax system consequent on the completion of the European single market on 1 January 1993. Thirdly, some address a number of technical issues designed to improve the working of the tax system. Fourthly, some provide for two new measures, which were announced last week.

In the first group, resolutions 11 and 12 set the main and small companies rates of corporation tax at 33 and 25 per cent. in the financial year 1992. We have the lowest headline rates within the European Community and the G7 countries. As a result of this and of other measures introduced last year, companies will pay £1 billion less in corporation tax in 1992-93 than otherwise would have been the case. The United Kingdom corporation tax regime for smaller companies is one of the most generous in the industrialised world. Over 80 per cent. of United Kingdom tax-paying companies are liable at the small companies rate of 25 per cent., which is applied when profits do not exceed £250,000.

Another provision of importance to many businesses that was announced by my right hon. Friend concerned capital allowances for computer software. Resolution 21 paves the way for the changes that he announced. At present, most business expenditure on computer software is allowable for tax purposes either as a deduction for revenue expenditure or, if it is capital expenditure, under the capital allowances regime.

However, capital expenditure on the right to use software, including expenditure on licences, does not qualify for relief because capital allowances are available only where the taxpayer has outright ownership of the asset concerned. Similarly, capital expenditure on software which has, for example, been transferred by electronic transmission does not qualify for any form of tax relief because the taxpayer has not acquired a tangible asset. The new rules will ensure that all capital expenditure on computer software qualifies for capital allowances on the same basis as plant and machinery used by a business.

As for income tax, the Bill will implement my right hon. Friend's proposal to give couples more choice over the allocation of the married couple's allowance. The new arrangements will allow married couples to transfer the whole allowance from husband to wife or to split it equally, and will come into force next year. They extend choice, and give fairer treatment in the tax system to women—a process that started with the introduction of independent taxation in the last Parliament.

Resolution 22 will modify the tax rules for maintenance payments following the introduction of the new Child Support Agency. At present, maintenance payments made under a court order to a divorced or separated spouse qualify for tax relief. The change will ensure that maintenance that has been assessed by the Child Support Agency will also qualify for tax relief in the same way. In addition, maintenance collected by the agency on behalf of a divorced or separated person will qualify for tax relief in the same way as it would if it had been paid directly to that person. The changes will begin when the Child Support Agency starts to operate, probably in April 1993.

The Bill will also contain provisions to bring to an end tax relief under the business expansion scheme at the end of 1993, while in the interim allowing the BES to be used for mortgage rescue schemes. The business expansion scheme for assured tenancies—which now accounts for the overwhelming majority of BES funds—was due to expire then in any case. Both that and the BES generally have given a valuable boost to equity investment, and to investment in private rented housing. They were always intended as time-limited pump primers. They have served their purpose, and, as my right hon. Friend said in his Budget, the time has come to end them.

The second group of resolutions—resolutions 2, 6, 7, 8 and 9—deal with the consequences of the European single market for the indirect tax system. The single market will involve the abolition of tax and duty controls at internal EC frontiers from 1 January 1993. That will bring great benefits and cost savings to business, to add to all the benefits that flow from other aspects of the single market programme. I regret to inform the House, however, that the programme also involves a substantial quantity of legislation.

In negotiations within the Community, and in drafting the necessary legislation, we have sought to consult business, for it is business that will have to operate the new systems. Throughout the negotiations, the United Kingdom has insisted that the burdens on business should be kept to a minimum. All the VAT and excise legislation on the single market has also been issued in the form of draft clauses for consultation. Therefore, not only will it receive detailed scrutiny in the House, but it has already been exposed to those who will have to operate it.

Let me briefly explain the key elements of the changes. First, there is VAT. At present, exports are zero-rated for VAT, and VAT is charged on imports. Control of the system is linked to physical controls at frontiers, and the necessary paper work is separate from the normal VAT return. With the single market, those physical controls, and much of the paper work that went with them, will be swept away. Liability to VAT will in future arise as a result not of importation, but of acquisition by the purchaser.

Sales to VAT-registered traders in other member states will continue to be zero-rated. VAT will be payable when goods or services are acquired from another member state. In such cases, VAT will be collected through the normal

VAT return, not separately as at present. Resolution 8 paves the way for that change, which will be implemented by Finance Bill clauses that were issued in draft at the end of February.

Secondly, there will have to be changes to excise duties. The principle will be that duty is paid at the rate that applies in the country of consumption. Excise goods will continue to move within the Community, under duty suspension, between bonded warehouses. To cater for traders who wish to place goods on the market immediately, provision has been made for goods to move from a bonded warehouse in one member state to a registered trader in another and then directly into the market place.

In the United Kingdom, those registered traders will be called REDS—whatever their political complexion. Their designation under last year's Finance Act as registered excise dealers and shippers—REDS for short—is a welcome sign that someone either in Brussels or in Customs and Excise has a sense of humour. Resolution 6 paves the way for provisions to complete the changes that were initiated last year.

As the House already knows, the single market legislation provides that goods on which tax and duty have been paid elsewhere in the Community can be brought back by travellers for their personal use; but United Kingdom tax and duty must be paid on any goods brought in by travellers for resale. That is like an acquisition for VAT. Compliance can be controlled through traders' accounts as well as through the use of declarations at ports. The existing "travellers' allowances" for those arriving from other EC countries will be abolished, but, to help Customs to distinguish between commercial transactions and private importation for personal use, the Council of Ministers has agreed minimum "indicative levels" for alcohol and tobacco. Above those levels, goods will be deemed to be for commercial use unless the traveller can satisfy the Customs authorities that they are indeed for personal use.

The House has considered all that in another form, but legislation will be needed to enact the new levels, to enable Customs to check compliance with them and to support the new excise arrangements generally. Again, Customs has consulted the trade on draft clauses for the Finance Bill, and resolution 7 paves the way for their inclusion in the Bill. I remind the House that duty-free shopping will remain until July 1999, as a result of successful negotiations led last year by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

The third group of resolutions address a number of technical issues designed to improve the working of the tax system. Most tax legislation works in the way in which the House and Parliament intend it to work, and people end up paying the right amount of tax. Sometimes, however, tax rules are found to be either more or less stringent than expected, with perverse results. That usually comes to light in the day-to-day dealings that taxpayers or their advisers have with Revenue departments, or when their interpretation is challenged in the courts. The Finance Bill will deal with a number of such cases.

Resolutions 13 and 14 reflect measures announced last November, well before the Budget. Both seek to correct defects in the rules governing the tax treatment of groups of companies. One covers the capital gains tax rules for assets leaving groups, while the other covers group relief share arrangements. Drafts of the clauses covering both measures were issued earlier this year, and a number of points made in the consultations will be reflected in the final Finance Bill clauses.

Both company group measures are meant to ensure that tax reliefs are available only as Parliament originally intended, and are not expanded in any way unintended by Parliament. But another measure, which corrects a defect in the law on enterprise zones, relaxes the rules where they are currently being interpreted more harshly than was intended. Our intention to legislate on that was announced last December, when we spoke of our intention to introduce changes to the legislation on capital allowances available on enterprise zone buildings.

The provisions included in the Finance Bill will correct a defect in the law, and will relax the rules for purchasers of used buildings. They will also curtail the open-ended nature of the relief, and target it better towards its original aim of short to medium-term regeneration in rundown areas. The balance of the three measures demonstrates that improving the working of the tax system does not always work to the advantage of the tax gatherer. All three will apply from the date of their announcement.

In his Budget speech, the Chancellor announced proposals to close another loophole. Companies were manipulating the business tax rules to defer tax when rent was paid between connected persons. That loophole will be closed with effect from Budget day, and it is covered by resolution 15.

Resolution 19 deals with a tax that has now been abolished, composite rate tax, which was levied on bank and building society interest. Its abolition by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister in his 1990 Budget means that non-taxpayers can now enjoy their bank and building society savings free of tax. The House will recall that, during debates on last year's Finance Bill, there were extensive discussions about the transitional arrangements in 1985-86 to accommodate a change in the way in which composite rate tax was collected from building societies. The result was that last year's Finance Act confirmed Parliament's original intention.

The new provision, which I announced in a written answer last week, is related to the composite rates set for the four subsequent years. It results from a legal challenge initiated by the Leeds Permanent building society, which argues that the composite rates set for those years have been inadvertently rendered invalid by last year's legislation. Whatever the technical merits of that case—I have to say that the Government are convinced that the rates were legally and validly set—the consequence could be a loss of composite rate tax for four full years. Huge sums of up to £15 billion could be involved. This is tax that has been paid and that has been reflected in the interest paid to investors.

The normal course would be for the Government to wait for the Leeds to test the validity of its actions in the courts, but that could take several years to resolve. In the meantime, there would be doubt and uncertainty over the Government's legal claim to a huge sum of revenue. No one can seriously suggest that it was Parliament's intention that no tax at all should be collected on bank and building society interest for those four years. We have therefore decided to put the matter beyond doubt now by confirming Parliament's original intention in setting the composite rates for the four financial years 1986-87 to

[Mr. Dorrell]

1989-90. As I announced last week, the provision will be retrospective to all composite rate taxpayers, without exception.

Mr. Peter Bottomley (Eltham): I confirm what the Financial Secretary said: that it was Parliament's intention that the composite rate tax should be calculated as it was calculated. What has changed, however, is that retroactive legislation has been passed by this House, without regard to its effect on the composite rate tax. Will the Financial Secretary confirm that what is at issue is not the £15 billion, which the Government collected and virtually all of which they need to keep, but, at the most, 1 per cent. of that, which is £150 million, and probably only half or even a smaller proportion than that?I do not want to anticipate the Finance Bill debates, but I should be obliged if my hon. Friend would confirm that.

Mr. Dorrell: I suspect that we may return to this matter during the passage of the Finance Bill, but I can confirm that my hon. Friend is right to say that the motivation of the Leeds Permanent building society is to draw attention to what it believes to have been an injustice at the time that the transitional arrangements were made. However, what I cannot confirm is that that is the effect of the action that the Leeds Permanent building society has brought. The effect of the action that it has brought, if its arguments were upheld, would be to render invalid the basis upon which composite rate tax was collected for four years. It is a matter of history that, during the four years in question, the yield from composite rate tax was £15 billion.

Finally, among these technical measures, I come to two further proposals that I am announcing today. The first concerns the special tax regime for life assurance companies that goes back to 1915. That regime reflects the fact that most of a life office's investment income will ultimately go to its policyholders. It has always been accepted that the income attributable to policyholders could quite properly be taxed while the company itself made a trading loss.

That view has recently been challenged by two companies. We are advised that the legal underpinning for that long-standing, established practice is less robust than was generally thought. We shall therefore be introducing clauses to correct the law and ensure that it does indeed reflect established and long-standing practice. As it often take some years finally to settle the accounts of insurance companies, the change will be made retrospective, with application to all life assurance companies. Anything less than full retrospection on this point would, I believe, confer unjustifiable and capricious windfall gains on some companies whose accounts remain open, and could cost the Exchequer several hundred million pounds.

The second proposal that I am announcing today arises from a recent decision of the special commissioners. They ruled that payments made under equity notes—which are a form of perpetual debt instrument—were interest for tax purposes. The effect of that ruling is to allow multinational companies to exploit asymmetries between differen: countries' tax regimes. I am advised that, if no action were taken, there could be a loss to the Exchequer of up to £150 million a year. The Government therefore propose to bring forward legislation in the forthcoming Finance Bill.

The legislation will have two components. First, it will restore the general understanding of the thin capitalisation provisions of certain double taxation agreements to what it was before the special commissioners' decision. Secondly, it will establish the relevant domestic law to include payments under equity notes in the definition of distributions. The legislation will apply to all payments made from midnight tonight. We believe that some aspects of the special commissioners' ruling are bound to be a departure from previously established practice. Accordingly, the Inland Revenue is seriously considering an appeal against that ruling.

Most of the resolutions before the House today appeared immediately after the Budget, but were withdrawn once the election was announced; but there is one resolution that reflects a new measure announced since the Budget. This is resolution No. 4. It paves the way for changes to the vehicle excise duty exemption for disabled people. These are being made as a result of changes to disability allowances that came into force on 6 April. As announced last week, in future the VED exemption for disabled drivers will be linked to the higher level of the mobility component of the new disability living allowance. That is in line with the previous entitlement, which was linked to mobility allowance.

The Government, however, have decided that it is no longer possible to continue to operate the exemption for disabled passengers. The Bill will therefore repeal it. This is necessary, because the old scheme for disabled passengers has become virtually impossible to administer, given that disability living allowance and attendance allowance are now self-assessed benefits. However, transitional arrangements will ensure that no individual who currently receives it loses the exemption.

The Finance Bill will also contain provisions that will give effect to the proposals announced by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer in his Budget to improve tax reliefs for charitable giving. My right hon. Friend proposed to reduce the minimum donation qualifying for tax relief under the gift aid scheme from £600 to £400. He announced that the reduced limit would take effect from 1 July. To speed the benefit to charities and to donors, my right hon. Friend the Paymaster General announced recently that we have decided to bring forward the starting date for these measures to 7 May. I believe that this change will be widely welcomed by charities.

Before concluding, may I take this opportunity to inform the House of developments on one item included in the Budget that will not appear in the Bill, as published, but about which new clauses will be tabled during the passage of the Bill? My right hon. Friend announced his intention to bring forward two measures designed to alleviate the cash flow problems of the film industry. The first would allow film makers relief for pre-production expenditure as it is incurred. The second would allow production expenditure to be written off for tax purposes at a rate of 33⅓ per cent. per annum, starting on the completion of the film.

In drafting the details of the legislation it has been necessary to draw on film industry definitions of, for example, pre-production expenses. We have consulted representatives of the industry on the relevant definitions and have received helpful input from them. In addition, I have received representations from the industry on certain aspects of the proposals which I shall want to consider

fully in formulating the legislation. In the circumstances, it has not been possible to complete the drafting of the necessary clauses to appear in the Bill when it is published, but we shall introduce new clauses dealing with those issues during the passage of the Bill.

The resolutions are largely technical but, although some of the material and content may appear dry, the purpose behind them is clear and addresses the real concerns of many millions of people. The Finance Bill that rests on the resolutions will take a stage further the Government's commitment to reduce the tax burden and sharpen incentives and rewards for wealth creation. That is the promise that we made to the electorate on 9 April, and it is a promise that we shall keep. I commend the resolutions to the House.

5.21 pm

Mr. Nicholas Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, East): This is the first opportunity that I have had, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to welcome you to the Chair and to congratulate you on your appointment. I also congratulate you on your astuteness in arranging to chair part of what is to be a long Finance Bill, but which is at least limited by time.

It is not easy to present these measures as evidence of a renewed and invigorated Government coming to the House with big ideas for the 1990s; and, to his credit, the new Financial Secretary did not try to do that. As ever with the Conservative party, it is not really possible to defend these measures on the ground of social justice; and, to his credit, he did not try to do that either. It is not easy to present these measures as evidence of competent public administration, but, because it is his job to do so, the Financial Secretary did try to do that. I congratulate him on his appointment and welcome him to the Front Bench during the first of what will be many Treasury debates. In the traditional spirit—at least for me—of what are still, regrettably, the Opposition, I want to be as helpful to him as I can. I shall draw his attention to what I think are some of the potentially difficult areas. However, having heard his speech, I think that he has discovered the principal one for himself—resolution 19.

Resolution 19 paves the way for a repeat of last year's composite rate debate. The new Financial Secretary may wonder why it is necessary. He may wonder why the primary legislation of 1985 was not comprehensive enough to cover the areas in dispute. He may wonder why the Inland Revenue got it wrong, at least according to the courts, in the regulations that it issued in 1986. He may wonder why the Government did not deal with the uncertainty by amending legislation, possibly in 1987 or, at the latest, in 1988. He may ask why the legislation that we passed last year was incapable of dealing with certainty with the issue that it was supposed to be addressing, leaving us to address the whole business again this year.

As the Financial Secretary will probably have appreciated by now, the Government could have got the legislation right last year. Had they done so, it would surely be possible for them to rely on the courts to decide the issue safely. I cannot believe that the Minister is telling the House that he has no faith in the British courts or the House of Lords, which gave us the original Woolwich building society judgment. Apart from the rather obvious point about there being £15 billion at stake, the Financial Secretary may well be wondering, quite reasonably, why and who is responsible. My advice was to be, "Don't ask." However, I see that he has already discovered who told the House:

> "The attraction of composite rate has always been that it allows small amounts of tax to be collected with ease from very large numbers of people. It is very convenient and very cost-effective".—[*Official Report*, 20 March 1990; Vol. 169, c. 1025].

The same person then went on to abolish composite rate tax.

As I have said, the Financial Secretary has wisely discovered who it was and my advice is not to emphasise that aspect of the problem. However, perhaps when he is discussing these matters with senior colleagues he could persuade the Prime Minister to revisit his old home on the Committee Corridor when these matters are before the Finance Bill Committee. He could look in on the debate on building society composite rate tax and, feigning surprise, could say "It is still there; it is." Perhaps he could say that with the same amount of conviction he displayed in the first Tory party political broadcast before the election.

I must alert the Financial Secretary to the possibility that the Government could be back next year with a clause to remove these matters from the competence of the courts. The clause could say that the Inland Revenue's interpretation of the legislation is final and has the force of law. The Financial Secretary seems a nice enough person and I hope that he is not the one who has to persuade the House that we should legislate in that way. That is the direction in which this shambles seems to be moving. It is a pathetic and incompetent episode. I fully accept that it is not of the present Financial Secretary's making; he will have his opportunities soon enough.

Resolution 9 paves the way for harmonising—in Britain's case that means reducing—car tax rates across the European Community. The choices before the Government are to forgo the revenue, raise the revenue elsewhere or introduce a new car levy that is not strictly an excise duty to replace the lost revenue. The cut in car tax to 5 per cent. in the Budget may give a clue about the Government's thinking. If that is so, in the reply to the debate, will the Financial Secretary tell us whether we can expect extra taxation elsewhere in the economy or is the effect of this allowed for in the future estimates of the public sector borrowing requirement?

It may be that resolution 5 reveals the way in which the Government intend to recoup the loss implied by resolution 9. Here, the Government's big idea is the sale of personalised car number plates. No doubt grateful junior Ministers have already clubbed together to purchase MAJOR as a present for their boss. Selling registration marks directly is not a bad idea, but it is not a big idea. It is the product of the sort of minds that can come up with the national lottery and a Secretary of State for National Heritage to run it—not the Treasury—but cannot come up with ideas about unemployment, economic growth, manufacturing industry output, the balance of payments deficit and the increasing poverty and homelessness.

The increase in poverty leads me to resolution 10, which paves the way for the consequential provisions following the new 20 per cent. tax band. When abolishing the lower rate band in 1980, Sir Geoffrey Howe told the House that the case for the lower rate band was never clear. Of course, that was after an election, not before.

The Government's claim is that an average single-earner family gains £2·64 per week from the measure. The

[Mr. Nicholas Brown]

fact is that 72p of that £2·64 is due entirely to annual indexation in line with inflation. The 250,000 families who pay tax but also receive family credit lose 70p in benefit for every £1 that they gain in the tax cut. The increases in excise duties that were announced in the same Budget cost the same average single-earner family £1·56 per week. All that leaves a net loss for the low paid of 76p per week.

Nobody can seriously believe that the Conservative party intends to assist the least-well-off; there is too much evidence to the contrary. The Select Committee on Social Services told the House that between 1979 and 1988 the poorest 10 per cent. of households endured a cut of 6·2 per cent. in real terms in their living standards. The study by Professor Townsend of Bristol university found that over the decade between 1979 and 1989 the real annual disposable income of the poorest fifth of households fell by £160. Over the same period the figure for the richest fifth rose by an astonishing £8,000.

The Prime Minister said that he wants a classless society, yet, as Chief Secretary and Chancellor, he presided over the most regressive shift in the tax burden of modern times. In 1979 the poorest 20 per cent. of our fellow citizens paid 30·5 per cent. of their total income in taxes, both direct and indirect. By 1988 the Conservative Government had moved the total tax take from the poorest 20 per cent. of the population from 30·5 per cent. to an obscene 39·7 per cent. Did they realise the error of their ways in 1988? Did the then Chief Secretary to the Treasury—now the Prime Minister—say that that was not the way to create a classless society? No, he did not. Like the rest of the Cabinet, he supported the poll tax which gave a further twist to the regressive direction of our tax system.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: Could not the explanation of the problem be that the Prime Minister does not accept that the problem exists? On "Election Call" on 31 March when that information was put to him, he answered:

"I don't accept your statistics"

and went on to say that he did not believe that the gap had widened. If the Prime Minister does not accept the facts, is there any chance that the Government will deal with the problem?

Mr. Brown: There is a dislocation between saying that one believes in a classless society and then doing nothing to bring it about. The facts are absolutely overwhelming and many of those to which I am referring are drawn from the Government's own answers to parliamentary questions. It is difficult for the Prime Minister, who is presiding over the Government, to say convincingly that he does not accept the facts that his Ministers are providing for the House.

When we challenged the Government on these issues, they did not defend what they were trying to do in the light of the available evidence. The Treasury ducked, weaved, evaded and did everything but answer parliamentary questions on the distributive effect of the poll tax, but the real effects of a decade and a half's redistribution of the tax burden are clear enough to any Member of Parliament with an inner city constituency. Real cuts in the income of the poorest, combined with long-term withdrawal of employment opportunities, create the circumstances that we saw on Tyneside last summer. This Finance Bill offers no hope or even change for this summer.

What of the better-off? In 1979, the wealthiest 20 per cent. of our fellow citizens paid 37·6 per cent. of their total income in all taxes, direct and indirect. By 1988, the Conservative party had got that figure down to 34·5 per cent. and was introducing the poll tax to reduce that burden still further by shifting it from the wealthiest 20 per cent. to the rest. Even without the poll tax, by 1988 the wealthiest 20 per cent. of our society were paying less tax as a proportion of their total income than the poorest 20 per cent.—34·5 per cent. for the wealthiest compared with 39·7 per cent. for the poorest. From 1988, the position of the poorest deteriorated further, largely due to the regressive effect of the poll tax.

By 1991, a two-child family on 75 per cent. of average earnings was paying 34·9 per cent. of its income in direct and indirect taxes. There was an increase in the rates and the community charge element from 3·5 per cent. in 1979 to 6·2 per cent. in 1991. No wonder the Treasury was shy at the time and for a substantial period after about releasing those figures.

This Budget and the motions fall to be considered at the end of more than a decade of regressive redistribution of the tax burden. Given that the Government have had two sets of Budget resolutions and two Finance Bills for one Budget and that a parade of Treasury Ministers—old and new—has fought for this Budget in the House, one would have thought that there might be something in it, that there might be an important stepping stone towards a classless society. Not a bit of it. There is nothing for the unemployed, nothing for training, nothing for industry and pitifully little even for small businesses about which the Conservatives say that they care. Most importantly, the financial resolutions offer no comfort to the millions of people whom the Government have pushed into poverty in the past decade.

5·33 pm

Mr. Peter Bottomley (Eltham): I congratulate the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) on the way in which he delivered his speech. It was all the more enjoyable to hear because he has an engaging style involving understatement. Had the same style been used during the general election by his right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith), who speaks for Treasury matters on behalf of the Labour party, the Labour party might not have done so badly. Clearly, one style works within the Labour party and another works across the country.

It might also be a good thing if the Labour party chose its leaders according to what they said and how they said it rather than according to their looks or their forensic debating skills—it might find that more of the country identified with it.

Mrs. Llin Golding (Newcastle-under-Lyme): I think that my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) is good looking.

Mr. Bottomley: If the hon. Lady starts to make a speech, I might make the same remarks about her, but for the moment I shall concentrate on her hon. Friend.

The resolutions raise a number of issues. My hon. Friend the Financial Secretary and the hon. Member for

Newcastle upon Tyne, East referred to the £15 billion covered in—I think—resolution No. 19 which was foreshadowed in a parliamentary answer on 7 May to a question by my hon. Friend the Member for Chelmsford (Mr. Burns). Before dealing with that, I refer to one or two other issues.

It is worth noting that the casualties of the election included not only Francis Maude but John Maples, whom I hope we shall see back in the House. Although he and I were unable to agree on resolution No. 19, I think that the whole House will recognise that he made a valuable contribution and would be able to do so again if he were to be re-elected. Of course, we may see the same happening with the many members of the Labour party who have returned as retreads. I am sure that many of them will join their party's Front Bench soon, although perhaps not as quickly as one of the Liberal Democrats who seemed to be speaking for his party at Question Time this afternoon in his first week in Parliament.

One important issue to which the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East did not refer was confidence. There is no doubt that there will be a greater air of confidence within the economy and among ordinary households—of whatever level of income—now that the uncertainty of the general election is out of the way. It would be possible for the Conservatives to argue that a Conservative victory will lead to more confidence sooner and that people will put their efforts and talents into new small businesses and into extra education and training in the hope that the rewards will stick with them and with their families.

I do not wish to make too much of a partisan point because I think that, in its review of the consequences of the general election, the new model Labour party will adopt most of the social democratic policies against which it fought—some rather more successfully in the past few weeks than in previous years. In view of the change in the Labour party's constitution and its change in approach, I believe that more Labour hon. Members will speak more clearly on behalf of those who set up their own businesses.

I do not exclude the importance of the industrial and manufacturing sector, but it is in the service sector—whether in retail or other services—that more people take risks with their family prosperity. I believe that the Labour party will speak more clearly for them, and I hope that the Government will also recognise more clearly what an immense burden has been carried in the past three years by people in small business, in the service sector and in retail.

For people whose businesses were built over generations, it was a personal tragedy to have them wiped out as a result of the massive recession. I pay tribute to those who have pulled themselves out of bankruptcy or liquidation and who are willing to have another go. We need to create circumstances in which the rewards for success appear to balance properly the risks of failure. That is where lower levels of taxation, an understanding of the risks that people are bearing and the ways in which taxes are imposed matter. However, with regard to the national insurance and tax system, we should be well advised to continue to ensure that people who owe money pay regularly.

Often, when people get behind, they find that the money that they should have paid to the public authorities has gone elsewhere; when businesses crash, it is even worse. Thus, as with the payment of rent, the community charge, the rates we had or the council tax as it will be, it is important to have a system whereby people accept their obligations on time. I recommend that the brain boxes at the Inland Revenue and Customs and Excise find a way to impose a tax penalty on big businesses which do not pay their bills to sub-contractors on time. An element of self-discipline would be greatly welcomed and would add to the velocity of circulation of money. I am sure that people considering expenditure and inflation will say that we would need to compensate for that, but it would be appreciated by contractors and sub-contractors.

I shall deal with some details, and I hope that my hon. Friend the Financial Secretary will forgive me if I do not stick to all the resolutions before us but deal with some of those which might be thought of. One resolution deals with high earners from overseas.

My hon. Friend the Financial Secretary referred to some help to be given to the film industry. There are two problems in the performing arts in that respect. One is that some very high earners—whether stars or producers—are reluctant to make films in this country because of the way in which the tax system works. Without asking for a detailed response from him today, may I suggest that my hon. Friend or some of his colleagues get together with those who are trying to put together projects in order to ascertain the impact.

As a middle income earner, I hesitate to say this, but sometimes, if we give some of the very high earners who are resident or normally work overseas, an apparent or actual better deal to come and perform here or create productions, whether on film or in the theatre, here, we find that more of our people are employed as technicians and in supporting those activities in other ways. If we did that in future, we would again become a centre of production and a centre of excellence for the performing arts—that would be important. Some people in the profession would be able to talk with some authority on the subject, and discussing it with them would be useful.

At the other end of the scale, we have not yet solved the problem of the difficulty and expense caused by the intermittent working patterns when people first come into the performing arts. People trying to earn a living as professional musicians or actors or something similar find themselves moving in and out of their desired employment, which involves expenses not fully recognised by the Inland Revenue. I am not sure whether a problem with VAT would arise, because people would not reach the threshold early. Will consideration be given to that, perhaps in consultation with some of the leaders of the acting profession, especially those involved in the Actors Benevolent Fund, who often have to pick up the pieces? It may be possible to find ways, at relatively low cost, to help people on to the first or second step of the ladder and allow them to carry on in their chosen profession.

If the national lottery and the Department of National Heritage can refurbish many more of the buildings in which people perform, we could find that more people are employed in entertainment, too. Help at the early stages would, of course, help people to become successful and go on paying more tax—which most people are happy to do at the rates that we are now introducing.

I know that the House will have other opportunities to consider the national lottery Bill when it is introduced, but I ask my hon. Friend the Financial Secretary now whether there will be an explanation of where the mythical £1,000 million will come from. We keep hearing that £1,000 million a year in extra money will be available for the arts,

[Mr. Bottomley]

heritage, sport and many other good causes. I do not believe that it is possible for more than one third of the stake money to emerge as good cause money. There will be friction costs, and some return to the prizewinners. I do not see the prizewinners settling for less than one third of what is staked, nor the other elements in the friction costs, such as retail distribution, amounting to less than one third, so we are talking about £3,000 million.

A reasonably high proportion of the money staked on horse racing comes back each time it is staked, so although there may be a turnover of, say, £3,000 million, there is only about £1,000 million of new money each year—at least, there is a multiplication factor; I probably have not got the figures quite right.

In contrast, most of the money won on the national lottery will not be recycled into it but will be used for other purposes. The money which goes to good causes will not be recycled into the national lottery; nor will the friction costs. In effect, if the result is to be £1,000 million, we are talking about an extra £3,000 million being used for this form of spending—to use a neutral word.

We know nothing about the taxation proposals, but most other forms of gaming and gambling carry heavy taxation—the taxation that would have been a feature of a Ways and Means resolution in the past. While the details of the national lottery Bill are being considered, people should come out into the open. I ask my hon. Friend the Financial Secretary whether there will be a clear statement on whether the deadline of 1 June in the White Paper is firm, or whether it is a target and there can be more discussion.

I believe that no one outside the House, and very few people inside, have given serious consideration to the idea of an extra £3,000 million in new gambling. That is roughly equivalent to all current gambling. My fear is not only that shared in Liverpool, with Vernons, Littlewoods and the other football pools people, with their genuine interests and staff interests; it is that we shall see unrestrained gambling and gaming.

There are restrictions on current gambling. For example, the football pools companies cannot use shops or television promotions. I believe that there have been four or five gambling and gaming Acts, all based on the assumption that those activities should satisfy a demand that is there, but should not stimulate more demand. I do not believe that it will be possible to keep the national lottery draw off the television. How can we allow that—and probably advertising for it, too—if we do not allow other forms of gambling and gaming the same facility?

I do not want this country to be seen as the gaming and gambling capital of the world. I do not want to sound too puritan, or Calvinist, but there is common sense in our present approach, which is to make provision for gambling and gaming tables, but not to allow those activities to be stimulated. Too many people would risk too much. I do not wish to go into too much detail now, but there is a series of questions that the Government should answer over the next few weeks.

In passing, I understand that the Home Office gambling and gaming team has not moved to the Department of National Heritage. It is difficult to see a proper distinction or differentiation being made between the responsibilities of the Home Office team and the team which I am sure is now being created in the Department of National Heritage.

I hope that the Churches and others concerned with social conditions will pay attention to the issues—not because it is necessarily right or proper to block the national lottery Bill, but to try to ensure that issues are considered in advance, rather than our simply finding ourselves with the benefit of the money, but with the "disbenefit" that many people's lives will be wrecked by the temptation of instant success.

I pay tribute to the pools industry for the fact that people in general do not stake large sums on the pools. A very few may win large sums but they do not stake too much. Very few people's lives are made difficult because of the money that they have put on the football pools.

Mr. William Ross (Londonderry, East): The hon. Gentleman mentioned the Churches while he was talking about the national lottery. Perhaps he would encourage his right hon. and hon. Friends in government to take notice of the views of the Churches in the Republic of Ireland.

Mr. Bottomley: My hon. Friend the Minister will have heard that remark. We should retain a focus on the experience of the Republic of Ireland. Some of the promises made there did not turn out to be accurate.

Mr. Barry Porter (Wirral, South): My hon. Friend is taking an unusually Cromwellian and gloomy view of people. As we already have a national lottery, called the premium bonds, can he tell us how many people have gone bankrupt as a result of buying those?

Mr. Bottomley: My hon. Friend the Minister will have heard the remarks of the hon. Member for Londonderry, East (Mr. Ross). The stake money on premium bonds is available to be paid back. It may be affected by inflation, but as we are now aiming at stable prices, premium bonds may become an even better deal.

Several changes have been made affecting charitable giving. Most have been welcome, and I am sure that others will be suggested. The gift aid schemes and give-as-you-earn schemes need more publicity rather than all those changes in the legislation.

I pay tribute to Mr. Russell Twisk, the editor of the *Reader's Digest*, who has taken positive action with his colleagues at work, as a result of which a level of giving has been reached under the give-as-you-earn scheme which I doubt can be matched by any other organisation. If more of us were willing to find out how people can come together and give successfully, and to gain charitable donations in new ways, using the tax break system, more of us would give more cheerfully and more often. That would be a good thing.

I am sure that my hon. Friend the Financial Secretary would be disappointed if I did not say something about resolution No. 19. As a stepping stone to that, may I say how important it is for us to pay serious attention to social politics. Social conditions need to be improved; people need greater opportunities in their lives. Often it is those whom we do not see in our ordinary lives who need those opportunities most. People need the opportunity to earn —too many people are out of work—and the opportunity for their needs over the family life cycle to be better recognised. People need the chance of better housing.

The building society movement has done as much as local authorities and housing associations over the past 40 years to increase the number of homes available and to improve their condition. We should recognise the role of those who founded the building societies in helping people to create new homes. I hope that now the building societies will turn more of their time and talent towards helping to create more new homes again, rather than simply helping people to buy and sell clean secondhand houses.

It is worth remembering that the way in which the building societies managed to help so much was by getting the savings of so many people. There are between four and 10 savers for every person who borrows. The taxation arrangements made it possible for the societies to expand without there being too much bureaucracy or form-filling for the depositors—the members of the societies.

The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East gave us a good potted history of the events that have led to resolution No. 19, one of the few resolutions to be introduced since the general election. As my hon. Friend the Minister said, it is clearly a consequence of the Leeds Permanent judicial review. That review has been joined by at least three other building societies that are adversely affected.

That conjoint judicial review is a bad precedent. On tax appeals, it is perfectly reasonable to say that if someone wins an appeal against the intention of the Government or of the Inland Revenue, he should necessarily get the benefit only if he appealed along with the person whose case was heard.

It is a very bad precedent to follow what has happened in the Woolwich case. The Woolwich went ahead with a judicial review. Others did not join in, although the Leeds Permanent, to mention just one, was the first to complain strongly about the use of the 1985 legislation in 1986. The societies shared the same lawyers.

If the Government were going to say, "We are not willing to accept the risk of the Woolwich winning", they should have introduced a resolution similar to resolution No. 19. They should have said, "We are going to knock out your judicial review by primary legislation". I would not have advised that, but I believe that that would have been a more open approach.

To have drawn a distinction between the Woolwich, the Leeds Permanent, the Greenwich and the other societies affected was a mistake which should be reviewed by the Law Officers, and by the legal advisers to the Treasury and to the Inland Revenue. There should be an open statement that from now on, in the absence of exceptional circumstances, those who gain by judicial review should be treated on all fours with each other. If not, we shall find that there is the extra cost of many people going for conjoint judicial reviews, which would be a waste of money and would give too much money to the lawyers.

One per cent. of the £15 billion will be at stake if the Leeds Permanent is successful in the judicial review. Whatever the outcome of resolution No. 19 and whatever the outcome of the Finance Bill, it would be sensible for the Inland Revenue or the Treasury to have discussions with the building societies that are adversely affected to see whether it is possible to draft a resolution which does not put £15 billion at risk and which could tidy away the issue.

Following the point made by the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East, no matter how often the Government bring retroactive legislation to the House—this is the third time—they cannot achieve the same object at the higher Court of Appeal. There is a good case for taking the issue to Europe where people can put their experience of extra taxation for a period for which they have already paid tax that satisfied the Revenue.

We had a merry-go-round of legislation and I doubt whether it will stop here. I seriously advise the Government to see whether it is possible to find a way out which will resolve the issue with reasonable rough justice.

5.52 pm

Ms. Tessa Jowell (Dulwich): I join other hon. Members in congratulating you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on your appointment. I have been elected to represent Dulwich, a constituency in south London a few miles from here. Within it are extremes of prosperity and poverty which mirror the country as a whole.

Dulwich is principally a residential area. What industry there was has mostly long since gone. Employment, being mainly service-based, has been heavily hit by the recession, and unemployment has increased locally by 99 per cent. since March 1990. One person in six is now out of work, and the fear of unemployment is a fact of life.

Action to end recession, to combat poverty and to see improvements in health care, raise standards in our local schools, the development of nursery education and nursery care, and the regeneration of our inner cities are all policies for which people in Dulwich voted and which led them to elect me as their Labour Member of Parliament and to displace my Conservative predecessor.

I take the opportunity to pay a sincere tribute to Gerald Bowden, who was the Conservative Member for Dulwich until the election. He served my constituents well and conducted the election campaign with dignity and integrity. He earned widespread respect for his active lobby against the rail link, an issue that I will continue to pursue along with local groups such as Peckham Against the Rail Link on the sure foundation that he laid.

I also record the debt that Dulwich owes to its previous Labour Member, Sam Silkin, the former Attorney-General, who represented the seat for 19 years until 1979. Local people say about him, "Sam was Dulwich". There was nothing more important to him than the attentive and conscientious care with which he addressed the problems and issues affecting his constituents. That is a fine tradition which I will do my best to follow in my work as the new Member for Dulwich.

I used to work at the Maudsley hospital in Dulwich, where my brief was to re-establish and resettle in the local community people with long-term and chronic mental illness. I want to talk about a very big question for my constituents—how we care for our elderly people, for people with mental illness and for people with disabilities, and how we get the best from community care.

In Dulwich, one person in five is over 65. The number of very elderly people living alone is on the increase. Serious problems are emerging in the local health service on the care of elderly people which arise partly from the loss over the past three years of 52 beds previously provided for elderly people. The closure of those beds has increased pressure for elderly people to be admitted to other beds, generally acute and surgical. The evidence of that pressure exists in the notorious and scandalous queues of people waiting on trolleys in the casualty department of King's College hospital until a bed in the hospital becomes free.

[Ms. Tessa Jowell]

The risks to elderly people are especially great. If they are confused, they may become even more so. There are attendant risks of dehydration, and pressure sores may develop even after a relatively short time lying on a trolley. A wait on a casualty trolley may set back the time of recovery. A longer hospital stay may be caused by the difficulties of the hospital's admission procedure.

Some of the elderly people seeking admission to hospital could be looked after at home if the community services were still available. I spoke recently to an elderly [illegible]who had been waiting for six hours to be admitted to King's and who had been lying on a casualty trolley. She had broken her arm, but she did not really need to be in hospital. However, there was no one to put her to bed at home, so hospital was the only safe alternative. Until a year ago, it would have been possible to get a district nurse to put her to bed, but the service has been cut.

Two Government policies are clashing headlong, and that elderly lady is the victim. The hospital needs to reduce its costs as it prepares to become a trust. That clashes with the other Government policy to provide responsive and individually appropriate care to elderly people in their own homes wherever possible.

If the community care policy is to work properly, elderly people must also have immediate access to the medical treatment they need. That is important if they are to have a real chance of being able to cope in their own homes, even with support. An elderly man is, for example, today waiting in a Dulwich hospital for a hip replacement. He cannot manage at home until his hip is repaired. However, by the time that he has his operation, it is likely that he will be so dependent that he will be unable to manage in his own home. Residential care will be the only alternative.

"Going into a home" and "arranging a residential placement" are bureaucratic carespeak which obscures the personal tragedy which the loss of a home invariably represents. Let us pause for a moment and consider what it means to leave one's home for ever and enter a residential or nursing home, however good the care, however much safer and however unavoidable. It means the loss of freedom to run one's life in the way that one chooses; to make a cup of tea when one wants; to wear the clothes that one wants to wear; to cook one's own choice of food and watch the television programmes that one prefers. Those are the freedoms which we properly take for granted and which define us as individuals. That is why it is so important to make the community care policy work and to understand the impediments to its success.

We will hear a lot during this Session about the need to measure the performance of our public services and about the role of the citizens charter. However, we should not be carried away by the creation of a new science to help us to recognise a good service. The delivery of health and community care should be measured against a simple question: hon. Members, as they take decisions about the care of vulnerable elderly people, should ask themselves whether what they are deciding is what they would want for themselves or for their families. If the answer is that it is not, the policy is unacceptable. That simple test should set our standards for the judgment of effective community care.

6.1 pm

Sir Michael Grylls (Surrey, North-West): I congratulate the hon. Member for Dulwich (Ms. Jowell) on her first-class maiden speech, which she delivered with great confidence and fluency. We were much impressed by what she said. Her handsome tribute to Gerald Bowden, the former Member for Dulwich who was a much loved and respected Member of this House, struck a chord with all of us. I hope that she will not take it amiss when I say that I am sure that we all hope to see Gerald Bowden back in this place in the very near future. However, I wish the hon. Lady success in her career, and the House looks forward to hearing from her in future.

There are many excellent measures in the Budget resolutions, and I want to concentrate on the changes in the inheritance tax for private businesses. Although Conservative Governments over the past 10 years have greatly reduced the impact of inheritance tax on privately owned businesses, it was still a penal burden which all too often could result in a business having to be sold or taken over by a larger firm. In such circumstances, that independent small business would cease to exist.

My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer should be congratulated on seizing that point and opting for outright abolition. From now on, firms can be passed on intact from one generation to another so that they can grow from one generation to another. When defending the continuation of any form of inheritance tax on privately owned businesses, previous Chancellors, including some Conservative Chancellors, have said that, with proper advice and planning, it was possible to avoid that tax. If the business was handed over within seven years, that tax could be avoided. However, that is the wrong way to consider the issue.

Business decisions that are tax-driven are all too often wrong business decisions. It is wrong to tell entrepreneurs that they can avoid tax if they hire professional tax advisers. It is wonderful that the House is about to abolish that tax and so tell that splendid breed of people from the 1980s—and I am sure from the 1990s as well—who have risked their own capital and effort in building up businesses, employing people and creating wealth, that, when they decide to retire or if they die, the Government will not take a large lump from them in inheritance tax. Those businesses can be continued by future generations of the family or by future generations of the management. They can carry on and expand those businesses.

The alteration to inheritance tax in respect of small businesses is a momentous part of the Budget. Strangely, in the excitement of the general election, it was not a central issue. I guess that a Labour Government would not have pursued that tax change. However, when the Budget is examined in years to come, the abolition of inheritance tax for private firms will, in the context of British entrepreneurship, be seen as an important and historic decision. I hope that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor will be encouraged by that.

I want to jump a wide gap from referring to the interests of small firms in relation to the Budget to an issue that affects many of our largest companies and international businesses. I must first declare an interest of which the House is aware.

Nearly seven years ago, during the passage of the 1985 Finance Bill, I tried to describe the efforts of the United Kingdom to eliminate the use by certain states in the

United States of unitary taxation as it affected British firms. That involved taxing companies not just on their profits within a particular state, but including that company's worldwide profits and other statistics.

That form of taxation still exists in California. It is internationally criticised and is agreed to be a barrier to trade. We want to remove as many barriers to trade as we possibly can. That form of taxation is also a severe irritant to good international relations. The use of unitary taxation has been condemned internationally by the United Nations, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, the European Community, Japan, Australia, Switzerland and Canada. They have all said that that form of taxation is the wrong way to deal with international business. Even the United States Administration has agreed with that.

The strongest opponent of unitary taxation has been the United Kingdom. Although the House had been patient to a fault, I said in 1985 that it could no longer continue to wring its hands about the issue and hope that something would be done. I said that the time for action had arrived.

As you will recall, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the House decided in 1985 to adopt retaliatory legislation in section 54 of the Finance Act 1985, which is now section 812 of the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988. I raise the matter today because, seven years after I raised the matter in 1985, I have bad and disappointing news. On Monday, the California supreme court issued an opinion in the Barclays bank case reversing victories obtained in the lower and middle courts. The opinion declared that unitary taxation is constitutional in California.

That news will be a shock to the House and to the Government. Many will say that it is an outrage, and I would agree. It is apparently a very perverse judgment. The House may be surprised to learn that the California supreme court believes that the United States Congress had approved unitary taxation because, although when the Senate originally considered article 9(4) of the United Kingdom/United States double taxation treaty, it failed to pass it by a majority of two thirds, it nevertheless received a clear majority.

The House may be surprised to learn that the California supreme court believes that, when the United States Administration assured Her Majesty's Government that they would use their best endeavours to eliminate the international application of unitary taxation, Congress had already acted to approve the tax. The House may be equally surprised to learn that the California supreme court believes that Congress, by failing to bar the use of unitary taxation, approved the use of such a tax.

I believe that the House will say, of course, that such arguments are nonsense. The California supreme court also believes that only the states of the United States and United States business have an interest in the outcome of the unitary taxation issue. That is profoundly wrong. The court has ignored the real interests of British international firms, which are welcomed in California and other places and are highly successful. It has ignored the real interests of the British Parliament and Her Majesty's Government by refusing to eliminate a method of taxation that is contrary to all internationally accepted principles of taxing profits where a company or group of companies operates internationally.

We can no longer wring our hands and hope that something will happen. I am sure that, with the agreement of Her Majesty's Opposition, the House will want to urge the Government and the United States Administration to seek an urgent review of the Barclays decision in the United States Supreme Court with no further delay.

You will recall, with your excellent memory, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that, during the 1985 retaliatory debate, the then Financial Secretary, the predecessor to my hon. Friend the Member for Loughborough (Mr. Dorrell), the right honourable John Moore, asked rhetorically:

"have we done enough to impress our friends in the United States the importance which we attach to the unitary issue?"

Sadly, tonight the House will say, "Apparently not."

We should send a clear message today that we shall wait no longer, that our patience has finally run out. I ask my hon. Friend the Financial Secretary to convey to my right hon. Friend the Chancellor the wish of the House that he introduce at the earliest possible opportunity the retaliatory clauses contained in section 812 of the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988. Only such action, and no lesser action, will convince the diehards in the United States who wish to cling to such an improper use of taxation, which is so damaging to investment and international trade. It is also damaging to Britain's relations with our great friend and ally the United States.

The role of Her Majesty's Government in taking retaliatory action must be finally to convince the United States Administration that Britain will not tolerate one day longer the continuation of this abominable form of taxation which, as I have said, is so damaging. I believe that the House will agree that it is damaging to international trade and investment and to British business in general.

6.13 pm

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): May I also welcome you to the Chair, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It is the first occasion on which you have called me, but I certainly hope that it will not be the last, in view of the length of the Parliament that stretches ahead of us. The whole House is pleased to see you in the Chair.

I also congratulate the hon. Member for Dulwich (Ms. Jowell) on an excellent maiden speech. It struck a definite chord with me, because my maiden speech nine years ago was on health and community care. The House will welcome her clear expertise on the subject and her obvious commitment to it. Tomorrow I shall have a meeting at one of my psychiatric hospitals which is about to become a trust. I shall be able to report that another Member of Parliament is well able to argue the case. I congratulate her and look forward to many more speeches from her.

I support what the hon. Member for Surrey, North-West (Sir M. Grylls) said. I have signed numerous motions on the issue that he raised. I wholly agree that it has gone on for far too long. The one word that he did not use was "unfair". Unitary taxation is downright unfair. Indeed, if everyone operated that system, world trade and business could grind to a halt. It is preposterous that people should tax the benefits of activities that have taken place halfway round the world and have no connection whatever with the receivers of that tax benefit. I agree with the hon. Gentleman that we need to press for urgent action on that matter.

By its nature, this is an esoteric debate. I do not even pretend to be qualified in the technical details of some of the resolutions on the Order Paper, but I want to address

[Mr. Malcolm Bruce]

several general and specific points. The first resolution is a catch-all to stop us from trying to change the Budget in any fundamental way. But one or two points arise. It is worth going back to the Queen's Speech and asking the Financial Secretary a question. The Queen's Speech says that the Government

"will reduce the share of national income taken by the public sector and balance the budget over the medium term, reducing taxes when it is prudent to do so."

How the hell will the Government do that?

Mr. Dorrell: In exactly the same way as we did it through the 1980s.

Mr. Bruce: That does not seem to me to be very likely.

Mr. Dorrell: We did it.

Mr. Bruce: Yes, but in different circumstances from those which the Government now face. The question that I was about to ask——

Mr. Nicholas Brown: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Bruce: Give me a minute.

The Government have produced forecasts for the medium-term strategy. Already, over the period 1990 to 1993, forecast repayments of £10 billion, £6 billion and £3 billion have become deficits of £0·5 billion, £14 billion and £28 billion. So over three years, the Government are just £61·5 billion down on their short-term forecast, to say nothing of their long-term forecast.

Indeed, at no time on the horizon can one see the Government achieving a balanced budget in anything that would normally be described as the medium term.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: The Financial Secretary's intervention was revealing. The total tax take from the British economy went up during the 1980s, not down. So the Financial Secretary is effectively announcing further tax increases this evening.

Mr. Bruce: That is a point to which I intend to refer. I freely admit that my speech is somewhat fluid and unstructured, so I can pick a piece out which I intended to come to later.

During the election, I was canvassing in one village in my constituency when I was asked a direct question by a gentleman who said, "I am on disability benefit. That is my only source of income. All this talk about tax cuts—what good is it to me? I do not pay income tax. But I do pay the increase in VAT, poll tax and all the other taxes imposed on me by this Government, who continually claim to cut taxes." For people like that constituent, taxes have done nothing but increase steadily under the Conservative Administration.

Indeed, as the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) said, the disparity between the tax burden on the better-off and that on the less-well-off has widened. The Government should consider how they can address that. A simple political comment is making many of us think, and I hope that it will make the Government think, too. A Government who can be continually re-elected with 42 per cent. of the vote can afford perhaps to ignore the poor and underprivileged, because such people do not have enough votes to defeat the Government.

I hope that the Government will not ignore the poor and will not allow the imbalance to continue. If they do, they will be setting up Britain to become a South American country, where the poor become very much poorer and the rich become very much richer.

Mr. Dorrell *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Bruce: The Financial Secretary is shaking his head. I do not suggest that that is the intention of the Government, but they are setting objectives in terms of political promises to the people who elect them which can be paid for only by squeezing the people who do not. It is high time that we sought to secure some cross-party consensus to address the problem of people such as my constituent and ensure that they do not face continuing reductions in their real standard of living, given that it is much lower than the average across the country.

It is unfortunate, perhaps, that resolution 1 will prevent us from introducing one or two pieces of "mischief" that might discipline the Government. They have failed to predict and manage the public sector borrowing requirement, and £60·5 billion is a monumental discrepancy. Perhaps we should set a target for what the Government think the PSBR is and introduce a requirement that, if they overshoot it, they undertake to raise the difference by increasing taxation or cutting services. That would impose a sharp discipline on all Government Departments to be more accurate in their forecasting and more close in their management and acceptance of responsibility for the state of the economy.

Businesses in Scotland, and especially small ones, feel that it is unjust that they have to pay £450 million more in business rates than they would pay if they were taxed on the same basis as businesses in England and Wales. I have already raised this matter with the Minister in an intervention, and I shall certainly take it up with Scottish Office Ministers. The Government have said that they are prepared to eliminate the discrepancy, but they have not said how long that will take. The measures that they have introduced suggest that the process is more likely to take 15 years than the lifetime of this Parliament. I ask the Government to give themselves a much shorter and sharper target and provide Scottish business with the chance to compete on an equal footing with businesses in England and Wales.

I shall raise a legitimate and important issue that I take up in all Budget debates. I shall continue pressing it until there is a response from the Government. I make what I consider to be a legitimate plea on behalf of the Scotch Whisky Association. The unique character of Scotch whisky is that it has, by law, to be matured for three years before it can be marketed as Scotch. I have been told on numerous occasions that this piece of legislation was requested by the industry because it wanted to secure the quality of Scotch and its distinctive character and maturity. It was requested, however, in 1913, and those who requested it are probably all now dead. The industry should be given the chance to engage in a reassessment.

Scotch whisky constitutes one of our major export industries. It is an important employer, especially in the more remote rural areas of Scotland. It is important also, of course, in some urban areas, where there are substantial bottling plants. The industry is at a definite disadvantage compared with its counterparts which produce other spirits in the United Kingdom or, more importantly,

produce them elsewhere in Europe. Its request is that it should be able to have tax relief on the statutory requirement to stock whole for three years.

The problem arose with the abolition of stock relief some years ago. Governments never admit publicly to mistakes of this sort, but I am assured that, when the then Chancellor of the Exchequer abolished stock relief, he did not realise the implications for the Scotch whisky industry. Ministers must know now, because the message is brought home to them every year. There are serious implications, and it is a matter of genuine concern. I believe that it is a legitimate interest, and I hope that Ministers will take it on board. Were it not for resolution 1, I would be motivated to table an amendment to the Finance Bill.

Do the Government have real control over the direction of the economy? Is the rather spurious accuracy of Budget figures anything more than a fantasy or fairy tale that reflects what the Government hope will happen rather than a solid belief? The figures are based on the presumption that there will be a 3·5 per cent. growth rate per annum, and I do not know many independent commentators who have the confidence to believe that that is likely to be achieved. I hope, of course, that it is achieved. I have no desire to see anything other than success for the recovery of the economy. At the moment, however, ministerial speeches do not create wealth, and the wealth-creation process suggests that the target, which is necessary for the fulfilment of the Government's budget, is not being reached.

There is a relationship with the unemployment figures. Unemployment has increased by 29,000, and the total is 2·7 million. I have been my party's employment spokesman in the past, and today I went the round of the studios with the shadow employment spokesman. We tried to find some new adjectives to describe the situation but it is difficult to make interesting and original comments on the monthly figures. It is clear that unemployment of 2·7 million is causing a great deal of misery for many families. It is not good enough to ignore those people because they are not part of the 42 per cent. who voted for the Conservative party. I know that some of them did vote Conservative, but heaven knows why.

Mr. Dorrell: They did so because they want jobs.

Mr. Bruce: They want jobs, but they have not been successful in obtaining them. In a way, that is neither here nor there. People are entitled to vote for any party according to their own judgment.

Unemployment is a tragedy and a waste for those who find themselves in that position. More to the point, it is a tragedy and a waste for the entire community. Those who are employed should be outraged at having to carry the burden of the many who are not. It is estimated that each unemployed worker costs the Exchequer £8,900 a year. If it were possible to reduce unemployment by 1 million—at 1·7 million, it would still be high—we would be able to generate £9 billion of revenue. Far be it from me to cross the Floor and determine the Government's priorities, but I would point out that the Government's objective is a standard rate of income tax of 20 per cent. If 1 million fewer people were unemployed, they would be able to achieve that at a stroke. Yet there is no evidence that the Government have the necessary will or imagination to set the necessary target.

I would have liked to see measures in the Budget designed to stimulate real jobs in new areas and new industries. We heard this morning that a royal ordnance factory in Lancashire is to shed 450 employees. We all accept that the peace dividend means substantial cuts in defence spending with consequential job losses, but it must be borne in mind that it is an employment area of high skill and high technology, and that traditionally it has a high export value. If we no longer have a need for its specific products, we surely have a need for the skills and capabilities of its employees and for the revenue that they could produce. We must find ways of reorienting and retraining them.

It is a matter of beating swords into ploughshares in modern, high-tech terms. We must try to ensure that the technical capabilities of the defence industry are introduced into new areas, so that skills are not lost and wasted and export opportunities are made secure. I would like to believe that the Government would accept that they have some responsibility to do that. The tax mechanism may be a useful component for introducing imaginative ways of stimulating special investment, long-term investment, research and export opportunities in areas where there is new growth. Perhaps there could be training support for those who have skills but need to be reoriented.

Sir Michael Grylls: Perhaps I should not intervene, having only just resumed my place, but I wish to say that the hon. Gentleman is on to an important point. As he has said, it is essential that firms in the defence industry switch to civil work. If the hon. Gentleman studies the record of the past two years, he will learn that this is beginning to happen. Much more of the turnover of British Aerospace, Lucas and other large companies is in civil work.

I part company with the hon. Gentleman when he says that there is an active role or pro-active role for Government. It would be better to keep corporation tax as low as possible and leave it to the brains, skill and entrepreneurial expertise of those who are responsible for firms in the defence industry to seek out new markets in the civilian sector. When Governments have tried to intervene, they have not been very successful.

Mr. Bruce: The hon. Gentleman may be surprised to hear that I do not disagree with anything that he has said. I was not suggesting that the Government should step in and act; I was suggesting that the Government should consider ways of ensuring that the private sector effort is given an extra spin by giving it some short-term additional tax incentive, tax relief or training boost to enable it to pick up the opportunities and make the switch more quickly than would otherwise be the case. I was not suggesting that the Government should say what the switch should be or second-guess the markets. We are at one on that issue. I am glad that the hon. Gentleman intervened to give me a chance to explain that.

I have tried to link my points to my concern that the Government are not in control and do not know what is happening. They are on a wing and a prayer, and are well out of touch with their own forecasts. I have suggested how they might achieve their targets.

I remain puzzled by the argument for the reduced 20 per cent. rate band. I will not dig out the papers now, but I have here endless speeches from Conservative Ministers saying that it was a daft idea, which was why it was

[Mr. Bruce]

abolished in 1981. It is not efficient at delivering its objective, which is to help the low-paid. *[Interruption.]* If the Minister is saying that that was a Liberal idea, I accept that, too. Every party has tried and opposed the suggestion on different occasions. I make no virtue of that. This is not suddenly a bright and consistent idea.

The reduced 20 per cent. rate band is not the most efficient way of simplifying the tax system, which is one of the Government's objectives. It adds complexity. Some people estimate that it would mean 800 extra staff; the Chief Secretary to the Treasury estimates 300 extra staff. It is not as effective as raising thresholds and targeting benefits, which would help to narrow the differentials that the Government have succeeded in widening over the years.

I accept that to some extent the Government are committed to the band. We have had an election, they have won and they must go ahead with it. However, I hope that they will give real thought to how they can simplify and structure the tax system in a way which provides incentives, but not at the expense of the very poor and the low-paid. I hope that the Government try to strike a balance between stimulating business and achieving social justice.

That should be the aspiration of the entire House, regardless of one's political base. It would be best if we got out of this ideological conflict and genuinely tried to find ways of achieving that more balanced result. Clearly, this Budget will not do that because of the Government's commitments, but I hope that the next one will.

6.32 pm

Mr. John Austin-Walker (Woolwich): I, too, congratulate you, Madam Deputy Speaker, on your election to your office.

My immediate predecessor had a reputation in the constituency as a hard-working constituency Member of Parliament. I hope to follow in that tradition as the representative for Woolwich.

As the new Member for Woolwich, it is impossible for me to stand in this Chamber without a sense of history. When I first moved to Woolwich in 1966, Plumstead school was at the bottom of my garden, which is now in the constituency of the hon. Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley). On the wall there was a plaque which said that on that spot Mr. William Ewart Gladstone had made his last speech to his Greenwich constituents. I doubt whether many Members of the House can claim to have had a speech made by a Prime Minister at the bottom of their garden.

Outside the Chamber there is a bust of another of my predecessors. Younger residents of Woolwich may know of Ernest Bevin only as the name on one of the Woolwich ferries. Parliamentarians will probably remember him as one of our great Foreign Secretaries. I prefer to remember him for his origins and trade unionism: born into poverty, often hungry and admitting that he sometimes had to steal for food as a young boy, he permanently identified with those whose experience had been the same as his. It has been said of him that

"unlike many self-made men of the Victorian age he never had any wish to climb out of his own class. He preferred, instead, to help it to rise and to rise with it."

In 1908 Ernie Bevin led the Right to Work movement. Given the absence of any reference in the Gracious Speech to the problems of unemployment, perhaps now is the appropriate time to relaunch that movement.

Unemployment in Woolwich and Eltham has risen 170 per cent. over the past year and more than 400 per cent. since 1979, with an overall unemployment rate for the constituency of Woolwich approaching 25 per cent. Around the town centre the level of adult male unemployment is 40 per cent. and in the Arsenal ward it is a staggering 60 per cent., the highest in London. The lack of any measures to redress that situation in the Government's programme is deeply distressing both for those already unemployed and for the many more in Woolwich who fear for their jobs and security.

Young people face the most difficulty and poorest prospects. The unemployment figures reveal the complete failure of the Government's training policies. Although the Government claim to give the highest priority to helping young people who have been out of work for more than six months, it is precisely in that group where the rise in unemployment has been highest. In the borough of Greenwich 790 people under 18 are registered, available and looking for a training place. There are currently 12 vacancies. Unemployment is costing the country more than £20 billion a year—money which could and should be invested in our schools, hospitals, public transport and training.

Woolwich has been particularly hard hit by the decline in jobs in manufacturing industries and the lack of training and skills opportunities for young people. London has the lowest percentage of apprenticeships in the country and the skills shortage will soon become apparent, if and when the recovery begins. Figures for economic performance published in January by my hon. Friend the Member for Fife, Central (Mr. McLeish) show that Woolwich and Newham, North-East are the hardest hit constituencies in London. Woolwich needs policies that recognise the need to rebuild our manufacturing base and offer opportunities for young people in training and education.

Of the 10 most deprived wards in Greater London, three are in and around Woolwich town centre. For 300 years the area was the home of and provided labour for the Royal Arsenal. At one time the arsenal employed 80,000 people and was the largest single factory in the United Kingdom. If ever there were an example of where the skills of people in the defence industry have been lost because of a lack of provision for retraining, it is Woolwich. The number employed in the arsenal today is down to 1,300 and those jobs are shortly to go.

The 300-year-old role of the arsenal as a huge primary industrial production centre has come to an end, but tremendous opportunities can be realised with Government help. The closure of the last remnants of the arsenal will release 75 acres of development land in the town centre. The arsenal site contains an extraordinary heritage of buildings of international significance, at least one by Vanbrugh. Yet the Ministry of Defence has allowed many to fall into such a state of dilapidation and decay that an estimated £60 million may be needed for basic restoration of those historic buildings which have lain hidden from public view behind the arsenal wall. That any property owner could allow such a heritage to fall into disrepair is a tragedy; for the Government to have done so is a crime. I invite the Secretaries of State for Defence, for

the Environment and for National Heritage to visit the site as a matter of urgency and to accept responsibility for the restoration and refurbishment of those buildings.

I welcome the commitment in the Queen's Speech to combat crime, but any attempt to combat crime must start from an understanding of its causes. My hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher), in his eloquent speech on Thursday, warned of the grave risk of a social explosion. My hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) reinforced that point today in his opening speech. Poverty and deprivation, alienation and hopelessness are the breeding ground for crime and provide an environment in which racism can thrive.

The Woolwich constituency includes most of Thamesmead, which is shared with the constituency of the hon. Member for Erith and Crayford (Mr. Evennett). Thamesmead shot into national prominence a year ago, following a brutal racist murder. Just over the boundary in the neighbouring borough of Bexley are the national headquarters of the British National party, masquerading as a book shop and in contravention of planning regulations. Bexley council, however, chooses to give comfort to racists by ignoring its presence and refusing to use its enforcement powers. The British National party churns out its racist literature and occasionally the police seize some of it, but the Attorney-General has so far failed to act.

Some people ask why we should make such a fuss about a small and insignificant bunch of freaks. But they are not so small and insignificant if one is black and lives in Woolwich, Plumstead, Erith, Belvedere or Thamesmead and is subjected daily to harassment, abuse, attacks on one's property and sometimes physical violence. I shall continue to draw the attention of the House to that threat, not only to the black citizens in my constituency but to our democracy and the freedom of us all.

If we are to tackle racism seriously, the law must be strengthened and racial harassment made a specific offence. More needs to be done to reform the procedures, systems and structures that perpetuate indirect discrimination and institutional racism. In employment, we need tighter and more effective legislation along the lines of the fair employment legislation in Northern Ireland.

Health care is another area of concern in Woolwich. The Brook hospital serves Woolwich. Its emergency unit is threatened with closure and the hospital's long-term future is in doubt. My hon. Friend the Member for Dulwich (Ms. Jowell) spoke eloquently about community care. As a former chair of the Association of Community Health Councils and a past chair of Greenwich MIND, I share her concern about the quality of community care. We need high-quality care, not services on the cheap provided often with reliance on low-paid or unpaid carers.

Increasingly, the burden of community care is being carried by relatives, usually women, often with no financial or emotional support. For those without relatives, being discharged from institutions often means the exchange of one institution for another—out of hospital and into the institution of poverty and isolation.

As chair of the all-party London Ecology Committee, I am disappointed by the Government's lack of commitment to environmental protection. The Prime Minister has expressed concern about tropical forests, yet his Government are prepared to drive an urban motorway, the east London river crossing, through Oxleas Wood in Woolwich, an 8,000-year-old ancient woodland and site of special scientific interest. In so doing, they are prepared to ignore the European environmental protection legislation to which the United Kingdom is a signatory.

I have spoken of the need for full employment to be at the top of the political agenda. Those employment policies must include a commitment to equal opportunities. I fully support the sentiments expressed by my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Leith (Mr. Chisholm) that free or affordable child care is an essential pre-requisite for equal opportunities in employment. I refer not only to care for the under-fives; the absence of child care beyond the age of five is also a barrier to many women seeking employment.

Regarding equal opportunity, I was pleased to be here on that historic occasion when we elected the first woman to hold the office of Speaker. That came about because of the past struggle of many women, with the support of a few men. One of those few men was another of my predecessors, Will Crooks, who was elected the Member for Woolwich in 1903. He campaigned for equal rights and first moved a Bill in the House in 1903 for the enfranchisement of women.

Will Crooks went from the workhouse to Westminster, but never deserted the ranks from which he came. In the words of his biographer, he continued to stand four square with the working classes against monopoly and privilege. He achieved a spectacular victory in Woolwich in the 1903 by-election, a result described by the Speaker of the day as the greatest by-election victory of modern times. His victory was followed by the election of Labour candidates in several parts of the country in the election of 1906, when it was said:

"This is the party that was born in Woolwich."

I have a proud history to follow.

In his maiden speech, Will Crooks asked to be forgiven for being controversial. He spoke out, in that 1903 speech, against the privatisation of defence contracts and criticised the unfair way in which contracting procedures favoured private contractors over the Government's own services. In the same way today, local authority direct service organisations are at a disadvantage compared with private contractors under the current compulsory competitive tendering arrangements.

Will Crooks apologised to the House for breaking with precedent by speaking out on an issue of concern to his constituents. I make no such apology. If I had failed to speak out on the very issues that are concerning my constituents, I would have had to apologise to them. I thank the House for its tolerance, but I assure hon. Members that, although the needs of Woolwich may have been overlooked by the Government, its voice will not go unheard in this Chamber.

6.44 pm

Mr. Peter Mandelson (Hartlepool): It is my pleasure to commend my hon. Friend the Member for Woolwich (Mr. Austin-Walker) on an excellent maiden speech. He demonstrated tremendous experience and knowledge, qualities that will enable him to make many more valued contributions to the House in the future. I only hope that I am able to acquit myself as ably as he has done.

In representing Hartlepool, I have the honour of succeeding Ted Leadbitter, who was as popular in the House as he was admired in his constituency. Ted Leadbitter was first elected in 1964. Supported by his wife

[Mr. Peter Mandelson]

Irene and his indomitable agent, Mrs. Elsie Reed, he lost no time in demonstrating his diligence and, equally, his independence.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn), who was Postmaster-General at the time, describes in his ministerial diaries for 10 February 1965—when the Labour Government had a majority of only three—how a new hon. Member, Ted Leadbitter from West Hartlepool, had written to complain about a telegraph pole being put up in front of a constituent's home. Refusing to be fobbed off with some bureaucratic response, the MP of three months' standing rang up my right hon. Friend's office with the message:

"Mr. Leadbitter regards the Postmaster-General's reply as so rude and evasive that he does not propose to come to the House or to accept the Labour whip until the answer is withdrawn and the pole is removed."

The pole was duly removed. I am sure that hon. Members can agree that in such important matters—to parody Edmund Burke—I, too, should be a representative of my constituents, not a delegate of my party. I can reassure the Whips, however, that I am not aware—at present at any rate—of any misplaced telephone poles in Hartlepool.

Ted Leadbitter's predecessor, the first Labour Member to be elected for the constituency, in 1945, was David Jones. A man who knew poverty and unemployment at first hand, Mr. Jones dedicated himself to freeing his constituents from the appalling social conditions of the time, "the evil days", as he called them, of ill-health, poor housing and insecurity in old age. David Jones' memory is particularly special to me because he was a friend of my grandfather when he was a Member of this House, and he spoke for David Jones at several elections.

When they took their seats, my predecessors took pride in representing the two Hartlepools. While I represent only one in name, I am conscious of the fierce community loyalties in both Hartlepool and West Hartlepool. Even before the two Hartlepools were each denied their own borough status, music hall references celebrated the local demand for home rule. In the review of local government to which the Conservative party is committed, the minimum that would be acceptable to current residents is the restoration of full unitary authority status to Hartlepool. I shall continue the work of my predecessor in supporting that change.

Hartlepool's great strength is that it rightly sees itself as a community, with shared needs, strongly felt local loyalties and a sense of common purpose and civic pride. That pride is especially strong now. Our football team, Hartlepool United, is at its highest ever league position in the history of the club; the West Hartlepool Rugby Football Club has gained promotion this season to national division one; and first-class cricket has arrived in the town, with the selection of the town's club as a venue for Durham county cricket.

However, there are serious challenges to be faced by my town. Fifty years ago, Hartlepool, like other towns, even with its social problems, was at least more industrially secure because of the success of its shipyards, engineering, steel-making and manufacturing. The task of the coming decade, as we approach the 21st century, is to transform a now industrially poorer and less confident Hartlepool into the thriving industrial community of the future that it can become. That is why the people of Hartlepool are now embarking on an era of change. They do so in the knowledge that it is not possible for any community or town—or, indeed, political party—to try to recreate the future in the image of the past.

For the first time, in the general election, the Labour party in Hartlepool received more than 50 per cent. of the popular vote. It was a vote to embrace change but it is still change for the same purpose now as it was 50 years ago: to use the power of the community, acting together, to improve the individual circumstances of all. Central to that process is a modern economic policy; new ways of revitalising industry; innovative solutions to the problems created by social change; and sustaining economic growth in ways that are friendly to the environment.

My aim is to see new opportunities created for my constituents so that the confidence and optimism experienced in former times can be enjoyed once again by old and young alike. New opportunities do not mean opt-out schools and opt-out hospitals. When the services of thousands of patients opt out and the local hospital ceases to feel like the local community hospital, when thousands opt out of schools and the local schools cease to be like local community schools, the foundation on which the community is based is being removed.

What is true for our public services is also true, although in a different way, for industry. We cannot rebuild the industrial strength of our nation when manufacturing investment fell by 13 per cent. last year and is still falling now. When apprenticeships are axed and young school leavers fail to find training places, when firms are denied the chance to adapt to new skills and technology, we are eliminating the means by which depleted communities can become strong again.

The local training and enterprise council has seen a 20 per cent. Government cut in its training budget this year. At a time of rising unemployment, is that any way to restore industrial strength to our country? The result of that short-termism is both to deprive our young people of the opportunity that they need to get on in life and to deprive the nation of talent and ability of its people, which is critical to its future success.

When the Conservative party changed its leader and softened its rhetoric, the promise was of a classless society, a nation at ease with itself and opportunity for all. But what hope is there for the young person without a job due to the recession, without training due to cuts in funding, and without benefit due to the actions of a Social Security Minister who is now Prime Minister?

What opportunity is there for the thousands in my constituency and the millions in this country, struggling in poverty and living on the margins of our society? What ease is there in the mind of anyone, in or out of work, if our industrial base, and, therefore, our economic future, lies untended and in neglect?

In truth, there cannot be hope, or opportunity or ease unless we all accept our responsibility to help create them and, in doing so, realise that this benefits us all. Yet when we examine the Government's economic policy we find that urgency and responsibility absent. In large part, that is because the Government cannot break free from their past. The days of reliance on some invisible hand of the market are as discredited as those of centralised planning and the command economy. We need a new partnership between the public sector, the business community and the Government, based not on dogma but on co-operation to

secure objectives in the interests of the economy as a whole. The principle of co-operation is more relevant than ever, even if we must look to different ways and new methods to fulfill that principle.

Let me stress that the townspeople whom I represent are looking for neither handouts nor subsidies from Government. They have never deluded themselves that the man in Whitehall knows best. In the absence of a Government willing to back the scale of investment in new skills and technology which we need in Hartlepool, the town has not sat back. Over the past decade, the local authority has worked tirelessly to bring in new employment, in both the service and industrial sectors. Indeed, even with the drastically reduced help available from central Government, the partnership between public and private sector has achieved much.

The new marina, being built with the backing of Teesside development corporation and the borough council, is a symbol of the town's efforts at recovery, even if it has not brought the employment that many hoped for. It has, however, helped to draw to the town the new Imperial War Museum located in the north, and I hope that that exciting project will receive the Government's full support. The marina will also enable the town to play host to the Round Britain yacht race this summer.

Hartlepool has made a powerful bid for the Department of the Environment's city challenge programme, and if it is successful, as I earnestly hope it will be, it will further help to transform the appearance and economic potential of Hartlepool's central locations.

All those initiatives show how willing we and similar communities are to work with any opportunities opened up to us. But imagine how much more successful the industrious people of Hartlepool would be with a Government committed to re-skilling the work force and actively supporting our local industrial effort. That co-operation is needed now.

Hartlepool and the whole of the north face immense competitive challenges: the savage nature of the current recession; the creation this year of the single European market; and the completion, in a few years, of the channel tunnel. If we fail to invest now, we cannot meet those future challenges.

In rhetoric, the Government accept that case. But they should also realise that to will the ends without willing the means is, as Tawney said, akin to inviting unwelcome guests to dinner in the certain knowledge that circumstances will prevent them from being able to attend. What Hartlepool and the north-east desperately need is not another cynical invitation to share in the nation's fortune, only to find that no place is set for it at the table. In the 1990s we need a decade of regeneration—in industry, our public services and our social cohesion. We can achieve that, but only if we recognise the size of the task to be done and the utter necessity of working together as a nation to achieve it.

Those values of partnership, co-operation and social justice represent all that is best in the Labour party, as true today as ever. It will be my privilege to advance those values on behalf of my constituents and my party throughout my time in this House.

7 pm

Mr. Nicholas Brown: I welcome you to the Chair, Madam Deputy Speaker, and congratulate you on your elevation to office.

There have been three absolutely first-rate maiden speeches from my hon. Friends the Members for Dulwich (Ms. Jowell), for Woolwich (Mr. Austin-Walker) and for Hartlepool (Mr. Mandelson). Each had something warm to say about his or her immediate and previous predecessors. Each of them—and it cannot be mere coincidence—had something to say about unemployment and its attendant problems.

My hon. Friend the Member for Dulwich emphasised the importance of community care issues. Of course, her remarks struck a chord with Labour Members, and I hope that they also struck a chord with Conservative Members. I have never heard the case put as well and as effectively.

My hon. Friend the Member for Woolwich also struck a chord with Labour Members when he spoke about unemployment in the defence industries. It especially struck a chord with me because Newcastle upon Tyne, East has similar problems with the decline of an employment base that is very much related to defence industries. It is tragic to see a major employer, which once employed 80,000 people, being steadily diminished, without the Government intervening to help to provide new jobs. As a public representative, I find it hard to preside over that. It is clear that the electorate of Woolwich realised the need to put into office someone who cared about the problem and who had a solution to it. I am confident that that is why they elected my hon. Friend.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hartlepool made a point that is well known throughout the northern region —that no other region has done more to help itself through the difficulties of the 1980s. My hon. Friend rightly praised the efforts of local people and institutions.

My hon. Friend quoted what I thought to be a rather dangerous anecdote about his predecessor, Ted Leadbitter. Indeed, I even thought that he was quoting it with approval. I am not sure that it is right for an hon. Member to quote with approval the behaviour of a predecessor who, when he was a new Member, held the Government—who had a majority of only three—to ransom just to get a telegraph pole removed. If in future there are more telegraph poles that need removing, I hope that my hon. Friend will be able to arrange that through gentle persuasion rather than through the blunt methods of his predecessor.

I and many other Members of the northern group of Labour Members often used to join Ted Leadbitter for a drink in the bar. Without casting any aspersions on his willingness to get in his round, I hope that it is one area in which my hon. Friend will not emulate his predecessor.

The hon. Member for Surrey, North-West (Sir M. Grylls) raised an important matter about unitary tax, although it was slightly wide of the motion. It is right that I say on behalf of the Labour party that the outcome of Monday's court case in California is very serious indeed. I want to make it absolutely clear that there is no distinction between the view of the Government and that of the Opposition on this matter. We are at one. I realise that the Financial Secretary and the Chancellor will need time to reflect on how best to proceed, but it is clear that

[Mr. Nicholas Brown]

the only way to get a resolution of this issue is to get the whole case in front of the Supreme Court in the United States.

If the Californian judgment means that to do that will be difficult or will be unduly or even substantially delayed, as I suspect it means, after reflecting on the matter the Government will need to make representations to our friends in the federal Administration of the United States. The double taxation treaty is supposed to exist between our two countries and we cannot continue to allow it effectively to be flouted by the Californian state government. It is sad that the Californian court system appears to be backing its state government because of domestic pressures rather than upholding international law.

The motions before us relate to the tax regime for this financial year. I regret that there is nothing in them to deal with the essentially regressive nature of the present tax system; nor is there any acknowledgement of the plight of the poor. Every Labour speaker tonight has called for such an acknowledgement. The poorest 10 per cent. of households spend 45 per cent. of their gross income on tax. The richest 10 per cent. of households spend 32·7 per cent. of their gross income on tax.

The hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) asked about the percentage of income spent on tax by the poorest households. I can give him the figures. The average household income for the poorest 10 per cent. is £4,081 a year. The total tax take from that sum is £1,835. Very little of that, just £40, is income tax. That is not because those people are all members of the royal family or that they are all too rich to pay income tax because they are professionally advised; it is because they are too poor to pay income tax. However, they are not so poor that they did not have to pay the rates and the successor poll tax. They are not so poor that they can get out of paying Excise duties, VAT or television licence fees. All those sums of money are part of the tax burden and they bear down more heavily on the poor than they do on the better off.

Those households also have to pay their gas bills—to help pay Mr. Robert Evans his 21·4 per cent. salary increase, which takes him to an annual salary of £340,000. That one person receives the equivalent of the income of 83 households drawn from the poorest 10 per cent. of our citizens. Not for nothing have gas charges risen by 167·7 per cent. between 1979 and 1991, compared with a retail prices index rise of 135·4 per cent. Today's truculent announcement of a price cut hardly makes amends for that obscenity in the gas industry.

It is because of those issues of injustice that people look to the Government—a Government who proclaim a commitment to the classless society—for help. If they look to the Government for deeds, what is reflected in these financial motions—rather than their words—proves that they look in vain.

7.8 pm

Mr. Dorrell: I echo the congratulations of the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) to his three hon. Friends who made their maiden speeches this afternoon. They were all good and interesting speeches. I am grateful to the hon. Member for Dulwich (Ms. Jowell) for her kind words about her predecessor, Gerald Bowden, who is a longstanding friend of mine. I understand that one of the Treasury Parliamentary Private Secretaries was his constituency chairman before being elected, so I hope that there will be a continuing relationship between the Treasury and Gerald. I also hope that he will find his way back to this House in the not-too-distant future.

The hon. Lady spoke of the importance of community reprovision at the Maudsley hospital. She will know that until only a month ago I was the Minister with responsibility for mental health services. I endorse every word that she said about the importance of an effective reprovision programme out of traditional mental illness institutions. She is quite right to place stress, in the successful discharge of that policy, on properly planned and managed community health care and social care services. I have said many times that I think that it is one of the great challenges facing health service managers. While I do not endorse everything that she said, I warmly endorse what she said about the importance of a proper community-based reprovision programme for people suffering from mental illness and learning disability and for the elderly.

The hon. Member for Woolwich (Mr. Austin-Walker) paid a tribute, at least in passing, to John Cartwright. Not all Conservative Members would number him among our close friends, but we always listened with respect to what he had to say. The hon. Gentleman then gave us a Cook's tour of what he saw as the problems in his constituency, which he alleged that the Government were not interested in. He listed jobs, crime, the health service and the environment. I waited for the issue on which he would be able to demonstrate lack of interest by those on the Treasury Bench. Although he will not agree with me, in my view he did not discharge the burden of proof in the way that he needed to in order to support his assertions.

The hon. Member for Jarrow (Mr. Dixon) was not in the Chamber when the hon. Member for Hartlepool (Mr. Mandelson) was recounting the story of the exploits of Ted Leadbitter when he first arrived in the House. However, as a former Whip—a member of the Broederbond—I shall ensure that the remarks of the hon. Member for Hartlepool are drawn to the attention of the hon. Member for Jarrow. As I was speaking earlier in the debate, I was conscious of the hon. Member for Hartlepool as a brooding presence under the Gallery. I wondered whether he would offer me some sartorial advice, or suggestions on how to improve the presentation of my case. I also wondered whether, if he had sat on the Government Benches, I would have survived at all.

The hon. Member for Hartlepool said—I think that I quote him accurately—that one should not

"try to recreate the future in the image of the past."

I entirely agree. I wish that in what he went on to say about schools, hospitals and businesses in his Hartlepool constituency he had followed his own advice. Perhaps the best advice that I can give him is to have the courage of his convictions and ensure that we do not

"try to recreate the future in the image of the past."

The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) asked about resolution 9. The changes envisaged in the resolution are about the system for collecting car taxes, not the tax rate, and there are, I am advised, no Community proposals for the harmonisation of car tax.

The hon. Gentleman twitted me about composite rate tax and my hon. Friend the Member for Eltham (Mr.

Bottomley) came back to the subject, as I thought that he might. I can only repeat what I said in an intervention in my hon. Friend's speech. The key point about the Leeds case is that, whatever the motivation of the managers in bringing the case, if their arguments were sustained in court, the effect would not be to reopen the transitional arrangements argument which we conducted and concluded in the House last year. Instead, it would render invalid the basis on which composite rate tax was collected for four financial years, to the tune of £15 billion. It was to put that question beyond doubt that I announced last week that we intend to introduce certain clauses in the Finance Bill.

I entirely agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Eltham about the importance of building society managers seeking opportunities to finance not merely the purchase of houses but the development and building of imaginative housing schemes. I think that he will agree that building societies already play a part in that, and it is a part which is to be welcomed.

My hon. Friend suggested that we should take action to bring into line the payment patterns of big companies when they meet their obligations to their creditors. I draw my hon. Friend's attention to what my right hon. Friend the Chancellor had to say on that subject in his Budget speech. My right hon. Friend said that the Government were proposing a three-pronged attack on the timely payment of bills. He said:

"First, the Government propose to require larger companies to state in their annual report and accounts how quickly they pay. Second, my noble and learned Friend the Lord Chancellor will be proposing simpler procedures in small claims and debt recovery cases.

Third, I want to see the Government's good record on the payment of bills extended to firms which win Government contracts. From next month, those successfully negotiating a contract with a Government Department will be required to include clauses in their own contracts with subcontractors which provide for the prompt payment of bills".—[*Official Report*, 10 March 1992; Vol. 205, c. 753.]

I hope that that goes some way to answering my hon. Friend's point.

My hon. Friend also stressed the importance that he places on ensuring that the tax regime is benign towards internationally mobile high earners. I also attach importance to that perspective of the tax system. While I am not sure whether, in my time as Financial Secretary, I shall be able to meet every one of his expectations, I am not blind to the point that he makes.

My hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, North-West (Sir M. Grylls) stressed the importance for entrepreneurs of the Budget proposals substantially to release business assets from the effects of inheritance tax, and I entirely endorse everything that he said. He then went on to a theme about which, as he said, he had spoken many times in the House—the effect of American unitary tax practice, particularly in California.

If my hon. Friend searches the records, he will find that I am a signatory of at least one and perhaps more than one early-day motion that he has promoted as he has argued this case in the House. Unlike some of the early-day motions that Back Benchers sign and come to regret when they later have to explain the strength of the Government's case from the Dispatch Box, that is not a signature that I regret. I am pleased to have signed the early-day motion and to have this opportunity now to carry through the policy that lies behind it.

My hon. Friend is right to express disappointment at the ruling of the Californian supreme court. The Government agree with my hon. Friend's argument that the basis on which the Californian legal system seeks to collect tax does not fit in with the international taxation of business. That has been the Government's view for some years. I am pleased that it is also the Opposition's view. It is also, as my hon. Friend will know, the view of the United States Government. Both the British and the American Governments have made clear their support for litigation in the American system to overturn those provisions. The American Government have submitted an opinion to the court setting out their opposition to the provisions that are operated in California.

My hon. Friend asked for early implementation of the penal provisions put into legislation in 1985. The time is not right for me to announce today that we shall use those provisions, but I assure my hon. Friend that we do not regard them merely as an ornament on our statute book.

The hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) put to the House a question posed to him by a man who asked, "What good is an income tax cut to me, on disability allowance?" That question goes to the heart of the strategy of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer. A similar question was posed by the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East who asked, "What is the big idea?" My hon. Friend the Member for Eltham answered both questions when he reminded the House of the importance of low marginal rates of direct tax, given that the first priority is the promotion of wealth creation.

It is by stressing the importance of sharp incentives and an effective system of rewards for those who take risks and commit themselves to extra effort that Governments get a free economy moving. That is the strategy which the Government have pursued consistently, and it has delivered results.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: I do not disagree with the point that the Financial Secretary is making, but he is deliberately trying to combine two issues. Yes, taxation can be used to stimulate investment and provide incentives; but that does not answer another question. Why must those on the lowest incomes be further squeezed to finance such incentives?

Mr. Dorrell: Will the hon. Gentleman allow me to develop my argument for a moment? He asked what the man on disablility allowance had to gain from a system that stressed low marginal rates of direct tax. The answer is this. If, by establishing a tax system that is friendly to incentives and therefore friendly to wealth creation, we build a more successful economy, we have a better economic base from which to draw the resources that are necessary for the welfare state that we all want.

In stressing the existence of a gap, the Opposition constantly pick up the wrong issue. The real issue is the question of the living standards of everyone in the country, including those at the bottom of the income scale. Opposition Members should consider the effect of the policies that we pursued during the 1980s on the man on average earnings, rather than the activities of the bond dealers—essential though they no doubt are in terms of fancy commissions in the City. After 13 years of Conservative government, the man on average earnings was 39 per cent. better off in regard to real-terms take-home pay than he was in 1979. Between 1974 and

[Mr. Dorrell]

1979, the man's take-home pay rose by 1 per cent. in real terms. Between 1979 and 1992, it rose by 39 per cent.—by £78 a week, for the benefit of those who prefer real today-money figures.

That is the quantum of the success of the Government's approach to managing the economy: a success measured not in terms of fancy commissions for well-paid people, but in terms of the man on average earnings living in the constituency of the hon. Member for Hartlepool, that of the hon. Member for Dulwich or that of the hon. Member for Woolwich. That is the principle which we sought to follow throughout the 1980s, and we shall follow it again in the 1990s. It delivered results before, and it will deliver them again.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That it is expedient to amend the law with respect to the National Debt and the public revenue and to make further provision in connection with finance; but this Resolution does not extend to the making of any amendment with respect to value added tax so as to provide—

(a) for zero-rating or exempting any supply;
(b) for refunding any amount of tax;
(c) for varying the rate of that tax otherwise than in relation to all supplies and importations; or
(d) for relief other than relief applying to goods of whatever description or services of whatever description.

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER *then proceeded, pursuant to Standing Order No. 50 (Ways and Means Motions), to put forthwith the Questions necessary to dispose of the further motions, which were made by Mr. Stephen Dorrell.*

2. TOBACCO PRODUCTS (RETAIL PRICE OF CIGARETTES)

Motion made, and Question put,

That provision may be made amending section 5 of the Tobacco Products Duty Act 1979.

The House divided: Ayes 247, Noes 25.

Division No. 5] **[7.24 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Bates, Michael
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chaplin, Mrs Judith
Chapman, Sydney
Clappison, James
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Deva, Niranjan
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Fishburn, John Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam
Fox, Sir Marcus
Freeman, Roger
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Philip
Gardiner, Sir George
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nicholas
Hawksley, Warren
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W H'f'rdshire)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Ms Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lynne, Ms Liz
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Moss, Malcolm
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pawsey, James
Pickles, Eric
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Soames, Nicholas
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*

Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'xl'yh'ath)*
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Wheeler, Sir John
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Irvine Patnick and
Mr. Nicholas Baker.

NOES

Ainger, Nicholas
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Ms Janet
Austin-Walker, John
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Cambell-Savours, D. N.
Cohen, Harry
Cummings, John
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Dixon, Don
Foster, Derek *(B'p Auckland)*
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Mackinlay, Andrew
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Morgan, Rhodri
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Sedgemore, Brian
Skinner, Dennis
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Wareing, Robert N

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Harry Barnes and
Mr. Bob Cryer.

Question accordingly agreed to.

3. VEHICLES EXCISE DUTY (GOODS VEHICLES)

Motion made, and Question put,

That provision may be made in relation to vehicles excise duty in respect of goods vehicles:—

The House divided: Ayes 242, Noes 17.

Division No. 6] **[7.35 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Bates, Michael
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chaplin, Mrs Judith
Chapman, Sydney
Clappison, James
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Deva, Niranjan
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Fishburn, John Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam
Fox, Sir Marcus
Freeman, Roger
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Philip
Gardiner, Sir George
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Ms Cheryl
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nicholas
Hawksley, Warren
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W H'f'rdshire)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Ms Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lynne, Ms Liz
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Moss, Malcolm
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pawsey, James
Pickles, Eric
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Ms Rachel *(D'mline W)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'xl'yh'ath)*
Trend, Michael
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel

Wheeler, Sir John
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Irvine Patnick and
Mr. Timothy Wood.

NOES

Allen, Graham
Bermingham, Gerald
Cummings, John
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Dixon, Don
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Mackinlay, Andrew
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
Pike, Peter L.
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Sedgemore, Brian
Skinner, Dennis
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Wise, Mrs Audrey

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Harry Barnes and
Mr. Bob Cryer.

Question accordingly agreed to.

4. VEHICLES EXCISE DUTY (DISABLED PERSONS)

Motion made, and Question put,

That section 7 of the Finance Act 1971, and section 7(2C) and (2D) of the Vehicles (Excise) Act 1971, may be repealed.

The House divided: Ayes 232, Noes 15.

Division No. 7] **[7.46 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Bates, Michael
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chaplin, Mrs Judith
Chapman, Sydney
Clappison, James
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cran, James
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Deva, Niranjan
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Fishburn, John Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam
Fox, Sir Marcus
Freeman, Roger
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Philip
Gardiner, Sir George
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Ms Cheryl
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nicholas
Hawksley, Warren
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W H'f'rdshire)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Ms Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Moss, Malcolm
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Norris, Steve
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pawsey, James
Pickles, Eric
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Squire, Ms Rachel *(D'mline W)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stewart, John
Streeter, Gary
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'xl'yh'ath)*
Trend, Michael
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Waldén, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Wheeler, Sir John
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Robert G. Hughes and
Mr. Irvine Patnick.

NOES

Allen, Graham
Austin-Walker, John
Cox, Tom
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Dixon, Don
Golding, Mrs Llin
Mackinlay, Andrew
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Pike, Peter L.
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Sedgemore, Brian
Skinner, Dennis
Spellar, John
Wicks, Malcolm H
Wise, Mrs Audrey

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Harry Barnes and
Mr. Bob Cryer.

Question accordingly agreed to.

5. VEHICLES EXCISE DUTY (REGISTRATION MARKS)

Motion made, and Question put,

That provision may be made—

(a) with respect to the fees and other sums payable in connection with the grant or acquisition of a right under section 11 or 12 of the Finance Act 1989; and

(b) for the payment of fees, payable into the Consolidated Fund, in connection with the extension of the period for any such right.

The House divided: Ayes 227, Noes 17.

Division No. 8] **[7.57 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Bates, Michael
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chaplin, Mrs Judith
Chapman, Sydney
Clappison, James
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cran, James
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Deva, Niranjan
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Fishburn, John Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Foster, Donald *(Bath)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam
Fox, Sir Marcus
Freeman, Roger
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Philip
Gardiner, Sir George
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nicholas
Hawksley, Warren
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W H'f'rdshire)*
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Ms Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Moss, Malcolm
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Norris, Steve
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pawsey, James
Pickles, Eric
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Squire, Ms Rachel *(D'mline W)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'xl'yh'ath)*
Trend, Michael
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Wheeler, Sir John
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Robert G. Hughes and
Mr. Irvine Patnick.

NOES

Allen, Graham
Cox, Tom
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Dixon, Don
Golding, Mrs Llin
Hutton, John
Mackinlay, Andrew
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Pike, Peter L.
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Sedgemore, Brian
Skinner, Dennis
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Wicks, Malcolm H
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Harry Barnes and
Mr. Bob Cryer.

Question accordingly agreed to.

6. EXCISE DUTIES (GENERAL)

Resolved,

That provision may be made, in relation to duties of excise on goods, for fixing the time at which a requirement to pay duty is to take effect and the time as at which the rate of duty is to be determined and for specifying the persons on whom the liability to pay duty is to fall.

7. PERSONAL RELIEFS FOR PERSONS ENTERING THE UNITED KINGDOM

Resolved,

That provision may be made amending section 13 of the Customs and Excise Duties (General Reliefs) Act 1979 with respect to the conditions subject to which reliefs may be conferred under that section.

8. VALUE ADDED TAX (ABOLITION OF FISCAL FRONTIERS ETC.)

Resolved,

That, for the purpose of giving effect to requirements of the directive of the Council of the European Communities dated 17th May 1977 No. 77/388/EEC and to the amendments of that directive by the directive of that Council dated 16th December 1991 No. 91/680/EEC—

(a) provision may be made for value added tax to cease to be charged on the importation of goods from other member States and to be charged, instead, on the acquisition in the United Kingdom of goods from another member State; and

(b) provision may be made amending enactments relating to value added tax on supplies or importations.

9. CAR TAX (ABOLITION OF FISCAL FRONTIERS)

Resolved,

That provision may be made amending the Car Tax Act 1983 in connection with the abolition of fiscal frontiers between member States of the European Communities.

10. INCOME TAX (LOWER RATE: CONSEQUENTIAL PROVISION)

Motion made, and Question put,

That provision may be made for the year 1992-93 and subsequent years of assessment in consequence of the introduction of the lower rate of income tax.

The House divided: Ayes 221, Noes 19.

Division No 9] **[8-08pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Bates, Michael
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chaplin, Mrs Judith
Chapman, Sydney
Clappison, James
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cran, James
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Deva, Niranjan
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Fishburn, John Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Foster, Donald *(Bath)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam
Freeman, Roger
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Philip
Gardiner, Sir George
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Ms Cheryl
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nicholas
Hawksley, Warren
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W H'l'rdshire)*
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Ms Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Moss, Malcolm
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Norris, Steve
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pawsey, James
Pickles, Eric
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Redwood, John
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'xl'yh'ath)*
Trend, Michael
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Wheeler, Sir John
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Irvine Patnick and
Mr. Nicholas Baker.

NOES

Allen, Graham
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Cox, Tom
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Dixon, Don
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Hutton, John
Mackinlay, Andrew
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*

Pike, Peter L.
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Skinner, Dennis
Spearing, Nigel
Speller, John
Wareing, Robert N
Wicks, Malcolm
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Harry Barnes and
Mr. Bob Cryer.

Question accordingly agreed to.

11. CORPORATION TAX

(CHARGE AND RATE FOR FINANCIAL YEAR 1992)

Resolved,

That corporation tax shall be charged for the financial year 1992 at the rate of 33 per cent.

12. CORPORATION TAX (SMALL COMPANIES: 1992)

Resolved,

That for the financial year 1992—

(a) the small companies' rate shall be 25 per cent., and

(b) the fraction mentioned in section 13(2) of the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988 shall be one fiftieth.

13. GROUP RELIEF ETC.

Resolved,

That provision (including provision having retrospective effect) may be made amending Schedule 18 to the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988.

14. COMPANIES CEASING TO BE MEMBERS OF GROUPS

Motion made, and Question put,

That provision (including provision having retrospective effect) may be made about companies ceasing to be members of groups.

The House divided: Ayes 217, Noes 16.

Division No. 10] **[8·20 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Bates, Michael
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bowis, John
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chaplin, Mrs Judith
Clappison, James
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cran, James
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Deva, Niranjan
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Fishburn, John Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Foster, Donald *(Bath)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam
Freeman, Roger
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Philip
Gardiner, Sir George
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Ms Cheryl
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nicholas
Hawksley, Warren
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W H'f'rdshire)*
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Ms Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Moss, Malcolm
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Norris, Steve
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pawsey, James
Pickles, Eric
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Redwood, John
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stewart, John
Streeter, Gary
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'xl'yh'ath)*
Trend, Michael
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Wheeler, Sir John
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and
Mr. Robert G. Hughes.

NOES

Allen, Graham
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Dixon, Don
Golding, Mrs Llin
Hutton, John
Mandelson, Peter
Pike, Peter L.
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Spearing, Nigel

Spellar, John
Wareing, Robert N.
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Harry Barnes and
Mr. Dennis Skinner.

Question accordingly agreed to.

15. RENTS OR RECEIPTS BETWEEN CONNECTED PERSONS

Motion made, and Question put,

That provision (including provision having retrospective effect) may be made about rents or receipts payable to a person who is connected either with the person by whom they are payable or with another person who makes payments in respect of the same land.

The House divided: Ayes 215, Noes 15.

Division No. 11] **[8.30 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Bates, Michael
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bowis, John
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chaplin, Mrs Judith
Chapman, Sydney
Clappison, James
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cran, James
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Deva, Niranjan
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Fishburn, John Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Foster, Donald *(Bath)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam
Freeman, Roger
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Philip
Gardiner, Sir George
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Ms Cheryl
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, Sir John
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nicholas
Hawksley, Warren
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W H'f'rdshire)*
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Ms Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Moss, Malcolm
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Norris, Steve
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pawsey, James
Pickles, Eric
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Redwood, John
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'xl'yh'ath)*
Trend, Michael
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Wheeler, Sir John
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Timothy Wood and
Mr. Nicholas Baker.

NOES

Allen, Graham
Barnes, Harry
Cox, Tom
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Dixon, Don
Golding, Mrs Llin
Hutton, John
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Pike, Peter L.
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Spearing, Nigel
Wareing, Robert N
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Dennis Skinner and
Mr. Bob Cryer.

Question accordingly agreed to.

16. EMPLOYEE SHARE SCHEMES (SPECIAL BENEFITS)

Motion made, and Question put,

That provision (including provision having retrospective effect) may be made amending section 80 of the Finance Act 1988.

The House divided: Ayes 211, Noes 14.

Division No. 12] **[8.41 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Bates, Michael
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul

Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bowis, John
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chaplin, Mrs Judith
Chapman, Sydney
Clappison, James
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cran, James
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Deva, Niranjan
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Fishburn, John Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam
Freeman, Roger
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Philip
Gardiner, Sir George
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Ms Cheryl
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, Sir John
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nicholas
Hawksley, Warren
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W H'f'rdshire)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Ms Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
Maclean, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Moss, Malcolm
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Norris, Steve
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pawsey, James
Pickles, Eric
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Redwood, John
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'xl'yh'ath)*
Trend, Michael
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Wheeler, Sir John
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Irvine Patnick and
Mr. Robert G. Hughes.

NOES

Allen, Graham
Barnes, Harry
Cox, Tom
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Dixon, Don
Golding, Mrs Llin
Hutton, John
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Pike, Peter L.
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Spearing, Nigel
Wareing, Robert N
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Bob Cryer and
Mr. Dennis Skinner.

Question accordingly agreed to.

17. Deep gain securities

Resolved,

That provision (including provision having retrospective effect) may be made amending Schedule 11 to the Finance Act 1989.

18. Rights in pursuance of deposits

Resolved,

That provision may be made about arrangements relating to rights in pursuance of deposits.

19. Reduced and composite rate

Motion made, and Question put,

That provision may be made about the reduced rate for building societies and the composite rate for deposit-takers for the years 1986-87 to 1989-90.

The House divided: Ayes 214, Noes 13.

Division No. 13] **[8.52 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Bates, Michael
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bowis, John
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chaplin, Mrs Judith
Chapman, Sydney
Clappison, James
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cran, James

Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Deva, Niranjan
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Fishburn, John Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam
Freeman, Roger
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Philip
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Ms Cheryl
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, Sir John
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nicholas
Hawksley, Warren
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W H'f'rdshire)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Ms Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Lynne, Ms Liz
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
Maclean, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Moss, Malcolm
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pawsey, James
Pickles, Eric
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Redwood, John
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stewart, Alan
Streeter, Gary
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'xl'yh'ath)*
Trend, Michael
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Wheeler, Sir John
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'fld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Irvine Patnick and
Mr. Robert G. Hughes.

NOES

Allen, Graham
Cox, Tom
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Dixon, Don
Golding, Mrs Llin
Hutton, John
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Pike, Peter L.
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Skinner, Dennis
Spearing, Nigel
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Bob Cryer and
Mr. Harry Barnes.

Question accordingly agreed to.

20. Banks etc. in compulsory liquidation

Resolved,

That provision (including provision having retrospective effect) may be made about companies that are or have been carrying on a deposit-taking business and are in compulsory liquidation.

21. Capital allowances (computer software)

Resolved,

That provision (including provision having retrospective effect) may be made about capital allowances in respect of computer software.

22. Child support maintenance and other periodical payments

Resolved,

That provision may be made with respect to periodical payments under the Child Support Act 1991 or section 106 of the Social Security Administration Act 1992 or under any corresponding enactment having effect in Northern Ireland.

23. Paying and collecting agents etc.

Resolved,

That provision may be made about the payment of income tax in respect of dividends or coupons by persons who are chargeable persons for the purposes of Part III of Schedule 3 to the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988.

24. Oil landed outside the United Kingdom

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of corporation tax and petroleum revenue tax, provision may be made about the valuation of oil which is, or could reasonably be expected to be, first landed in a country other than the United Kingdom.

25. Relief from tax (incidental and consequential charges)

Resolved,

That it is expedient to authorise any incidental or consequential charges to any duty or tax (including charges having retrospective effect) which may arise from provisions designed in general to afford relief from taxation.

Procedure (Publication or Rates of Interest)

Resolved,

That, notwithstanding anything to the contrary in the practice of the House relating to the matters which may be included in Finance Bills, any Finance Bill of the present Session may contain provision removing the requirement imposed by section 5(8) of the National Loans Act 1968 to publish certain rates of interest.

Procedure (Future Taxation)

Motion made, and Question put,

That, notwithstanding anything to the contrary in the practice of the House relating to the matters which may be

included in Finance Bills, any Finance Bill of the present Session may contain the following provisions taking effect in a future year—

(a) provision in relation to the married couple's allowance,

(b) provision in relation to the business expansion scheme, and

(c) provision in relation to capital allowances in respect of buildings and structures in enterprise zones.

The House divided: Ayes 212, Noes 13.

Division No. 14] **[9.03 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Bates, Michael
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Bowis, John
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chaplin, Mrs Judith
Chapman, Sydney
Clappison, James
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cran, James
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Deva, Niranjan
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Fishburn, John Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Foster, Donald *(Bath)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam
Freeman, Roger
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Philip
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Ms Cheryl
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, Sir John
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nicholas
Hawksley, Warren
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W H'f'rdshire)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Ms Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
Maclean, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Moss, Malcolm
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pawsey, James
Pickles, Eric
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Redwood, John
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'xl'yh'ath)*
Trend, Michael
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Wheeler, Sir John
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Irvine Patnick and
Mr. Tim Boswell.

NOES

Allen, Graham
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Dixon, Don
Golding, Mrs Llin
Hutton, John
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Pike, Peter L.
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Spearing, Nigel
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Harry Barnes and
Mr. Dennis Skinner.

Question accordingly agreed to.

FINANCE BILL *[Money]*

Queen's Recommendation having been signified——

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act of the present Session relating to finance, it is expedient to authorise the payment out of money provided by Parliament of sums payable by virtue of any provision of that Act enabling provision to be made under section 128 of the Finance Act 1990 about the repayment of sums paid to the Secretary of State in connection with the retention, sale or assignment of a vehicle registration mark.—*[Mr. Dorrell.]*

Ordered,

That a Bill be brought in upon the foregoing resolutions: And that the Chairman of Ways and Means, Mr. Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr. Secretary Clarke, Mr. Secretary Heseltine, Mr. Secretary MacGregor, Mr. Secretary Howard, Mr. Secretary Lilley, Mrs. Secretary Shephard, Mr. Michael Portillo, Mr. Stephen Dorrell, Sir John Cope, and Mr. Anthony Nelson do prepare and bring it in.

FINANCE BILL

Mr. Stephen Dorrell accordingly presented a Bill to grant certain duties, to alter other duties, to amend the law relating to the national debt and the public revenue, and to make further provision in connection with finance: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time tomorrow and to be printed. [Bill 5.]

Orimulsion

Motion made and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Robert G. Hughes.]*

9.14 pm

Mr. Peter L. Pike (Burnley): I am delighted to be able to make this, my first speech in this new Parliament, with you in the Chair, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I welcome you to your new post. I know that you will fill it with distinction.

I should express my appreciation to Madam Speaker, who has given me the opportunity to raise this matter in an Adjournment debate so early in the new Parliament. We are debating an issue of considerable importance. I have restricted the terms of the debate to the burning of orimulsion at Padiham power station, although I recognise that the matter is of wider concern, because when I submitted my application just over a week ago I envisaged the debate lasting for the traditional half an hour. Instead, we have more time to debate the important issues that this subject raises. It is right that we should do so.

I know that several of my hon. Friends have already expressed wider concerns. Indeed, while Padiham power station is within the constituency and borough boundary of Burnley, the pollution that it may emit will drift and cause considerable problems in a much wider area, depending on the direction in which the wind happens to be blowing. Therefore, this is not just a local issue of concern; it affects a much wider area.

I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) would have liked to be with us tonight but, unfortunately, in the past 24 hours, major redundancies in the royal ordnance factory in his constituency have been announced. I am sure that hon. Members will appreciate why my hon. Friend has found it impossible to be here for the debate. But for that constituency problem, of great importance and urgency, he would have been here to show his concern.

There is concern among both Labour and Conservative Members about the burning of orimulsion at Padiham power station. I know that the hon. Member for Ribble Valley (Mr. Evans) asked a question about this yesterday and has issued a statement today. He has chosen not to speak in the debate tonight because he has not made his maiden speech and wishes to do so in a debate that is less restrictive than this one. His statement says that he has stressed to Ministers his

"concern that the burning of orimulsion would lead to an increase in the current sulphur level over Read and Simonstone",

which are parts of the Ribble valley that are adjacent to the Padiham power station. The statement continued:

"because of this, he would not be prepared to support the burning of orimulsion at Padiham Power Station."

That shows the widespread concern about the burning of orimulsion.

I would never read *The Sun*, but some time ago I saw on television a report of an article in that newspaper entitled "Black rain eats cars". It said that the rain ate through the paint on more than £6 million worth of cars because it had been affected by emissions from a PowerGen station in another part of the country. I know that the hon. Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw) will try to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to speak about this as well. That was my first hearing of the word

"orimulsion". I did not know what it meant. *The Observer* ran articles on the subject, one of which identified orimulsion as a front-runner for the title of filthiest fuel in the world. Not long after that, I received a message telling me of a proposal to burn orimulsion at Padiham power station, in my constituency. I was extremely worried by that.

In fairness to National Power, let me say that it has kept me informed throughout. Indeed, I received some information about orimulsion from National Power yesterday: the company considers that it is a beautiful fuel that will solve many problems. BP-Bitor, the company that wants to sell the fuel, also sent me some literature yesterday.

Throughout the exercise, the company has supplied information to the local authorities and to me and has tried to allay our fears. None the less, given that the only available information comes from those who want either to sell or to burn the fuel. I am beginning to wonder whether that information is genuine and can be accepted without doubts.

Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution is still examining the exercise. Ultimately, it will lay down certain conditions, and will say either yes or no to the proposal. If any questions remain in my mind in regard to safety, however, and if I think that those questions cannot be answered, I shall feel that we must say no to the fuel. Safety is crucial.

Mine is not the only constituency involved. The wind may blow the pollution towards Pendle, and, when it blows from the north-east, it may drift over Hyndburn. I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Hyndburn (Mr. Pope) is very concerned about that.

Mr. Greg Pope (Hyndburn): This is indeed a matter of major concern to the people of Hyndburn. Padiham power station is less than a mile from the boundary of my constituency. Is this not another example of the use of a cheap and dangerous fuel by a privatised industry that will put profits before people?

Mr. Pike: My hon. Friend makes a valid point. As he said, the power station is fairly near the boundary of his constituency; it is also on the edge of my constituency and the constituency of Ribble Valley. Part of the Hyndburn constituency is clearly visible just across the road, and parts of Pendle are not far away. The wind is not constant, and may blow at different speeds and in different directions.

In the previous two Parliaments I was a member of the Environment Select Committee and was involved in early reports that the Committee put out about acid rain. Those reports condemned the "tall chimneys" approach to dispersing emissions from power stations, but the proposals were initially rubbished: it was said that there were no problems with acid rain. Over the years views have changed, and I believe that it is now recognised that the Committee identified a real danger. Now we must be satisfied that we shall not increase the existing problems.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hyndburn made a valid point when he referred to the financial considerations. I was told by the press that they had been told that the Minister who would reply to the debate would be from the Department of Trade and Industry. The Government have done away with the Department of Energy: energy now forms just a section of the Department of Trade and Industry.

I welcome the Minister for the Environment and Countryside to his new position on the Treasury Bench. I am glad that a Department of the Environment Minister is to reply to this debate. If a Department of Trade and Industry Minister had been sent here, it would have increased people's fears that environment problems would not come first and would not be looked at as closely as other aspects of the matter. I repeat that I welcome the Minister to his new post. I had dealings with him on a number of other issues in the last Parliament when he had ministerial responsibilities in another Department. I am glad that the Government have chosen to recognise that this debate is concerned with environmental problems.

The Opposition are concerned, however, that the Government do not intend to introduce a new green Bill. We were told before the election that there would be a new environmental Bill. We believe that they have chosen not to introduce such a Bill because their view is that green issues have a lower priority than cash.

The Minister for the Environment and Countryside (Mr. David Maclean): No.

Mr. Pike: The Minister says, "No." The Government have to prove their case. I believe that over the four or five-year term of this Parliament our fears will prove to have been justified. If, however, we can accept in good faith what has just been said by the Minister, we shall be happy. It would be good to know that green issues are important to the Government.

The Government still have a 40 per cent. stake in National Power. If they chose to do so, they could, by means of their shareholding in National Power, direct policy. However, they choose not to do so, and that is extremely worrying. National Power is in competition with PowerGen, which has already obtained permission to use orimulsion at certain power stations. Therefore, National Power quite rightly says that if PowerGen is allowed to use this cheap fuel on an experimental basis, it, too, should be able to do so. The point, however, is that PowerGen carried out those experiments before the Environmental Protection Act 1990 was passed. I was a member of the Standing Committee that considered the Bill. The Environmental Protection Act represents a tremendous move in the right direction. It did not go as far as the Opposition would have wished, but I repeat that it represents a major move in the right direction.

The question is whether the provisions of that Act will be applied to the Padiham power station and Pembroke power station proposals. The new competition within the industry means that the privatised companies have to compete with each other. That worries many of us. The use of natural gas for the generation of electricity at peak times in, say, January may be sensible, but one has to question its use at other times of the year. National Power argues that natural gas is a good fuel to use for the generation of electricity because it is clean, not a polluter. However, it then goes right to the opposite extreme of opting for a cheap fuel that would cause major pollution problems.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): The hon. Gentleman knows that today I received an answer to a question about the Pembroke power station that dealt with this issue. It reveals the confusion to which the hon.

[Mr. Simon Hughes]

Gentleman just alluded. If the change of use proposed for the power station in Burnley is the same as that proposed for Pembroke, two approvals will be required from the Department of Trade and Industry—one for planning permission to extend the building and the other from Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution to authorise the burning of orimulsion. It is possible that then there would be a planning public inquiry which, this answer tells me, would be set up and decided upon by the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. That was a bit of a surprise to me. There is to be no proper consideration of fuel in any form of inquiry, and presumably that is what the people of Lancashire and south-west Wales would want. An inquiry would mean that the entire matter would be raised in one debate. That would alleviate many fears in Wales and the north-west.

Mr. Pike: The hon. Gentleman has made a valid point. The issues involved in the use of this fuel are too important to allow proposals to be considered in such a bits-and-pieces manner, in different parts of the country and not necessarily in the same way. The hon. Gentleman referred to the possibility of a planning inquiry. I do not know whether matters would be dealt with differently in Wales, but the fact that this point is to be decided by the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry raises fears about whether environmental issues or money will be the main factors. That is extremely worrying.

Whether energy provision is publicly or privately owned, I believe that the Government have a right to determine what fuel sources should be used and in what percentages. Energy is so crucial to our everyday lives in industry, commerce and at home that it should not be left to a competitive private sector and free market forces. There is a fundamental difference of view on that aspect.

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): Does my hon. Friend agree that when Britain is suffering severely from a trade deficit it seems extraordinary that, as a result of Government policies, we are now importing 15 million tonnes of natural gas, 20 million tonnes of coal and, if the orimulsion proposals are allowed to go ahead, God knows how many million tonnes of orimulsion? All that will damage the balance of trade and cause disaster to the coalfield communities.

Mr. Pike: My hon. Friend must have been reading my mind, because I was about to deal with that. When we have our own resources, it seems crazy that we should import orimulsion, coal and perhaps increasing quantities of natural gas, all of which imports worsen our balance of payments. The Government say that they can manage our economy; yet even though we have had our own massive resources of oil and gas over the past few years, we still have a huge trade deficit.

The environmental issues are crucial. Far too many questions are unanswered. Many people are worried about whether we know all the questions that we should be asking. That may seem a strange thing to say, but we are talking about a brand new fuel and we do not know the long-term implications of its use. It may be that, although we are currently focusing our attention on important environmental matters, they may not be the most important matters. I am concerned that, even though we may use the fuel on an experimental basis, there may be a problem. What do we do if, in 10 years, a Minister has to come to the Dispatch Box and say, "I'm sorry, but because we have been allowing that fuel to be burnt at Padiham power station, we have a terrible disaster in Rossendale and Darwen"? I am pleased to see that my hon. Friend the Member for Rossendale and Darwen (Ms. Anderson) is present.

Ms. Janet Anderson (Rossendale and Darwen): This issue is of great concern to my constituents. They have —and have had for many years—a deep interest in environmental matters. The proposal will worry them deeply if it proceeds, which is why the Labour-controlled Rossendale borough council voiced its strong opposition to it. I fully support that stance.

Mr. Pike: My hon. Friend underlines the point that I am making. There is concern now but in 10 years' time, if a Minister from whichever party had to say, "We are sorry, but there is a disaster in Rossendale or Pendle", or wherever it may be, what on earth would we do? It would be no good saying that the authorities acted in good faith but had no idea of the implications. Therefore, unless the Minister can say that we are absolutely certain that using the fuel is 100 per cent. safe and that there can be no problems at all, we must say that we are not prepared to allow it.

Mr. Dobson: Will my hon. Friend cast his mind back to what he said a few minutes ago about chimney emissions causing acid rain and about that finally being acknowledged? I recall the very dim and distant days when I first started work at the generating board. I recently checked its annual report—and the Minister should listen to this if he is also listening to experts.

Mr. Maclean: I am listening.

Mr. Dobson: I was not suggesting that the hon. Gentleman was not. The generating board's annual report for 1962 or 1963, annnouncing the new single stack chimneys under the heading "Clean air", said that as its new contribution to cleaning the air it would use one chimney per power station with one flue. It believed that the chimney emissions would hurtle out at such a temperature and speed that they would rise into the upper atmosphere and do no harm at all. That was what the chimney emission experts said in the 1960s but they were, in fact, announcing the invention of acid rain.

Mr. Pike: My hon. Friend is right. In all the time that I served on the Select Committee on the Environment—which was an excellent Committee under a Conservative Chairman, Sir Hugh Rossi, who is no longer with us—it produced some extremely good reports on long sea outfalls, chlorofluorocarbons and other issues. All those reports were initially rubbished and thrown into the waste bin, but a few years later people saw some truth in them and realised that they contained issues of which they should take note. There is a parallel to tonight's debate because, at the moment, we do not know all the facts about orimulsion.

Orimulsion is a fuel based on the bitumen from the Orinoco delta in Venezuela. BP Bitor is a joint company involving Venezuela and BP in this country. The bitumen comes from the ground in massive quantities and is mixed with water to make it transportable. The fact that it is mixed with water and is an emulsion causes particular

problems when it is burnt in the combustion process to create energy. If the combustion process is not right and if there is a large amount of water with the emissions, will it return to earth more quickly? What other problems could be caused? That is one example of the problems that we face.

My hon. Friend the Member for Rossendale and Darwen mentioned her local authority in relation to the proposal for Padiham. Local authorities such as Burnley, Hyndburn, Pendle and Ribble Valley, Rossendale borough council, Lancashire county council and others in the immediate area are all working together and expressing similar concern to HMIP. They are all unable to find experts independent of BP or of National Power to give them advice on what they should suggest objectively to HMIP. That has been the difficulty for them and for anyone trying to make constructive proposals to deal with the request to burn orimulsion at Padiham power station.

Friends of the Earth say that the burning of orimulsion could fail to meet EC directive 80/779 and they believe that it could fail to meet the terms of the Environmental Protection Act 1990. Orimulsion produces 20 per cent. more sulphur dioxide and a higher percentage of respirable dust than residual fuel oil.

Padiham power station was considered for burning orimulsion because it was built as a coal-fired station, and then became oil-fired, then one generator was returned to coal and the other was hardly used; so, relative to the age of the power station, the second generator set is fairly new.

A difficulty emerges. Of course sulphur emissions can be reduced if action is taken, and if HMIP insists on measures to deal with the emissions and all the problems with other emissions, whatever those happen to be. The problem that arises is that National Power—or, in the case of the other proposals, PowerGen—may say that the measures are too expensive, and the companies are not prepared to carry them out.

Knowing how the Government work, I suspect that they may say to National Power, "Okay, we will bend the rules and allow you to go ahead anyway." They will consider the Environmental Protection Act in terms of BATNEEC—best available techniques not entailing excessive costs—and agree that the costs are excessive, and allow the companies to go ahead. That is a grave worry, so we shall be interested to hear what the Minister says about it.

Friends of the Earth are worried about the percentage of heavy metals—which is higher than that in residual fuel oil—such as vanadium, and the carcinogenic metal, nickel. Some of those metals will be destroyed during the combustion process, but the evidence is clear that a larger percentage than with oil or other fuels will be emitted into the atmosphere. Such emissions can have implications even more serious than those of sulphur. I know that National Power says that that is not true, but I do not believe that the company has yet proved its case sufficiently to convince other people. There are more worries about the heavy metal emissions than about the sulphur because of their long life and the gradual, cumulative effect over the years.

I asked earlier how much National Power would invest in Padiham. That sum must, of course, be considered relative to its life span. The power station may have another 10 years left—12 years at the most. How much more money are people prepared to invest in it? That question does not mean that I am not concerned about the jobs at the power station. I fought to keep it, and I want to see it survive—but not as a safety hazard to the people who work in it and the wider public.

I know that several other hon. Members wish to speak in the debate, so although there are many other items that I could raise, it would be wrong for me to prevent other people from making a contribution. It is important to show the wide concern about the proposal. I shall say only a little more, and then allow other people to speak. We certainly want the Minister to have adequate time to respond.

To quote an item from English Nature, Dr. Farmer said:

"The burning of Orimulsion planned by National Power can only increase ecological damage caused by acid rain".

The World Wildlife Fund and the Countryside Commission have written to HMIP objecting to the proposals to burn the fuel. That shows the concern of a wide spread of people and organisations involved in environmental and ecological matters. They are concerned about acid emissions, the implications for soil and water, for plant and water life—and, of course, ultimately, for human life as well. We all hope that HMIP is carrying out its duties towards the public under the Act, but there are some question marks, because what happens is not seen out in the open.

The Minister could answer the questions tonight by saying that the Government will not allow the proposal to go ahead unless they are 100 per cent. certain that the fuel can be burnt safely and that there are no unanswered questions. The Minister may say tonight that he believes that the best way forward in considering the burning of the fuel is to allow a public inquiry at which all the many important issues and the other issues that will be brought out in this debate can be properly aired and properly considered. Everyone will then have the full facts. That is why this debate is so important.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): I will call the hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Ainger) next. Although I fully understand that he may want to make remarks about his predecessor and that he may want to express other pleasantries, I must point out that it will be necessary for him to stick to the main subject of the Adjournment debate.

9.45 pm

Mr. Nick Ainger (Pembroke): I congratulate you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on your appointment. I wish you well in your office as, I am sure, do all other hon. Members.

I am the first Labour candidate to be elected to the House for Pembroke since 1966. I am also the first Labour Member for the reorganised Pembroke constituency which was established after the 1979 election. I will try to keep my traditional comments brief, because we are debating an important issue and I do not want to take up valuable time.

I pay tribute to my immediate predecessor, Mr. Nicholas Bennett, who was undoubtedly a hard-working Member of Parliament. That was recognised by the Prime Minister in his first reshuffle when he appointed Nicholas Bennett the Under-Secretary of State for Wales. I wish Mr. Bennett well. I understand that he is determined to return to this place. All I say to him is that I wish him well as long as he is elected in a safe Tory seat and not in a Labour seat. He inherited a majority of almost 10,000 from his

[Mr. Nick Ainger]

predecessor, Mr. Nicholas Edwards, who is now Lord Crickhowell. He was a distinguished Member of the House and served well as Secretary of State for Wales for a long period in the 1980s. Lord Crickhowell is now the chairman of the National Rivers Authority.

I will go briefly through the problems that Pembroke faces which are apposite to our debate. Pembroke has many wonderful things going for it, especially its coastline and its national park. Generally, it is a most beautiful constituency and I have been lucky to live there for 21 years. I intend to stay there as Member of Parliament and certainly as a resident. My hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) knows the area well because he is a regular walker in the unique Pembroke national park.

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): That is enough of that.

Mr. Ainger: That is enough of that.

Although we have many benefits, we have serious economic problems. The Milford Haven estuary has one of the largest petrochemical installations in Britain. It has three oil refineries and an oil-fired power station and is a major port in any terms. However, Esso decided to close its refinery in the early 1980s. The Milford fishing industry has been in decline and has now gone into receivership. I understand that the vessels have recently been sold to Irish interests.

We have had major closures in the defence industry, which is a major employer, and we now face the possibility of RAF Brawdy and RNAD Trecwn closing with massive unemployment consequences involving between 1,200 and 1,500 people which in a rural constituency is rather like major cities having 5,000 or 10,000 redundancies at once.

Against that background, I will describe how carefully the local authorities have considered the application by National Power to burn orimulsion at the Pembroke power station. With the greatest respect, I have to say that Pembroke power station is a giant in comparison to Padiham power station, which is more a minnow in terms of size of combustion plant. Pembroke is a 2,000 MW station.

National Power plans to import up to 3 million tonnes of orimulsion and burn it in Pembroke power station. As my hon. Friend the Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) has said, not only does orimulsion have a high sulphur content per unit, but it has a 30 per cent. water content and therefore a much lower calorific value than ordinary heavy or residual fuel oil. In other words, one must burn half as much again to obtain the same amount of energy and, in doing so, one creates half as much again of sulphur dioxide emissions.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Burnley said, sulphur dioxide is a major cause of acid rain. He referred to the problems in his constituency and in neighbouring constituencies. However, with regard to Pembroke, we are not simply talking about a local, regional or national problem; we are talking about an international problem.

If National Power receives the go-ahead without installing flue gas desulphurisation, which would virtually eliminate sulphur dioxide emissions, the Germans and the Scandinavians will be on our backs complaining, quite rightly, that Pembroke power station is massively increasing acid rain problems in their countries.

My hon. Friend the Member for Carmarthen (Mr. Williams) has already raised the issue of acid rain deposition in his constituency and my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, West has explained that the National Rivers Authority is expressing grave concern about the catchment areas in the Cambrian mountains, in the Elan valley reservoir area and in tiny pools. The NRA fears that if orimulsion is burnt in Pembroke power station without flue gas desulphurisation, the sulphur dioxide deposits will greatly acidify the streams and rivers that currently support salmon and trout fisheries. That is a major problem for north Lancashire, south-west Wales and Pembrokeshire, and it spreads throughout Europe.

My constituency has the highest level of unemployment in Wales. The current figure is 5,200. I am sensitive to statements or practical implications that could affect unemployment in my constituency. I should love to see unemployment plummet in my constituency, but I am a realist. We have a major problem and a dim future when we consider what is on the horizon, particularly in relation to the defence industry.

My hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) and my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, West, in his capacity as Opposition Front-Bench spokesman on energy, have spoken to the workers at Pembroke power station. The workers recognise that there will be a serious environmental problem if orimulsion is burnt in the power station without the proper pollution controls.

I have referred to sulphur dioxide and the problems that it is already causing in Europe. Unfortunately, the Black forest is literally black at the moment as a result of acid fall-out. However, my hon. Friend the Member for Burnley also explained that, while orimulsion contains sulphur, it also contains heavy metals such as vanadium and mercury. A planning application was originally before the Department of Energy and is now before the Department of Trade and Industry. It was made because National Power plans to install four large dust precipitators to remove the particulate material from the flue.

I have here a document produced on behalf of Dyfed county council by Gibbs Environment, an independent consultancy. It states clearly that, even with the so-called state-of-the-art filters which National Power plans to put on the stack, there will still be a significant increase in the amount of dust emitted from the stack. As it is such fine material, part of that dust will be heavy metals such as vanadium and mercury. In certain concentrations they are carcinogens and they undoubtedly cause asthma and the like. There are great fears among the local populace, because the dust would be a local rather than regional, national or international fall-out.

The document was produced by scientists, not politicians. It also says that because the fuel has a large water content it is possible that local clouds of not sulphuric but hydrochloric acid could fall, given the right climatic conditions or, for Pembroke and the surrounding areas, the wrong climatic conditions. There could be local acid rain fall-out within the national park and the towns of Pembroke, Haverfordwest, Milford and so on.

The scientific evidence is overwhelmingly against the proposal. The scientists are saying not only to the county

council, the Pembrokeshire Coast national park and South Pembrokeshire district council but to the World Wide Fund for Nature, the National Rivers Authority and the Countryside Council for Wales, all of which have registered objections, that there should be a proper public inquiry and investigation, as my hon. Friend the Member for Burnley has said. This is a new fuel. We must look differently at the way in which we treat the flue gas emissions from the stacks. In Germany, Denmark, Japan, Spain, Italy, Canada and the United States, Governments insist on full flue gas desulphurisation and state-of-the-art filtration systems before orimulsion can be burned neat.

The problem for National Power is simply, as was said earlier, that its competitor PowerGen took over the Ince B power station on Merseyside. The Central Electricity Generating Board had been running an experimental burn of orimulsion at that power station when the takeover took place. PowerGen has been allowed to continue it. In that respect, I have a great deal of sympathy with National Power; its competitor has been allowed to burn orimulsion without flue gas desulphurisation, special filters or anything else, because it started burning the fuel before the Environmental Protection Act 1990 came in, along with the various controls and reviews involved in that legislation.

PowerGen is in the same market as National Power, yet National Power is faced with the possibility—I hope that it is a distinct probability—that if it is ever given permission to burn orimulsion it will be only with full FGD and proper state-of-the-art filtration. Let us be honest: National Power is competing not only with PowerGen but with coal and gas. Surely Conservative Members appreciate the concept of the level playing field. If flue gas desulphurisation is not fitted at Pembroke power station, at Padiham or anywhere else, there will be no level playing field. Cheap fuel is being brought in and it will produce massive amounts of acid rain. There are distinct possibilities of heavy metal fall-out and local acid rain because National Power is not willing to make the investment—I admit that it would be large—to put in FGD.

It being Ten o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put.

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Robert G. Hughes.]*

Mr. Ainger: I know that other hon. Members wish to speak and I shall try to be brief.

National Power is, understandably, looking towards burning orimulsion full time at Pembroke power station. Following the hike in crude oil prices in the early 1970s, the station has never been able to run in the way for which it was designed, which was as a base-load station burning heavy fuel oil supplied by the adjacent oil refineries. National Power wishes now to turn the power station into a base-load station burning orimulsion. It says that if Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution, or the Government, do not impose what are in my opinion the necessary pollution controls, it will wish to run the station—all the four units—to produce up to 2,000 MW of electricity. It says that it is unwilling to make the investment in flue gas desulphurisation, purely for commercial reasons.

I suggest that if it is commercially viable in the United States, Canada and Germany, where orimulsion is being burnt by private generators, to make the investment, it is similarly viable in the United Kingdom. There is no doubt that National Power is trying to get away with burning orimulsion on the cheap.

I want to see employment continue at Pembroke power station. If orimulsion is to be burnt in the United Kingdom, there must be all the necessary pollution protection that is now available. There should be a level playing field for National Power and PowerGen. There should be a level playing field also throughout Europe, which will extend to our German competitors or colleagues, call them what you will.

At Pembroke power station there are 300 employees, but a cut is planned for March, 1993. The management has said that if orimulsion goes ahead 80 or 90 jobs will be lost instead of 150. Even if permission is granted by HMIP, the present 300 jobs will not be secure.

I am most grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Burnley for raising an important issue and giving me the opportunity to draw to the attention of the House the grave problems that Pembroke faces.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I understand that the Minister would wish to reply at 10.10 pm.

10.4 pm

Mr. David Shaw (Dover): I congratulate the hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Ainger) on making his maiden speech in the difficult circumstances, on this occasion, of trying to be non-controversial. I congratulate him on his fair and well-justified comments in paying tribute to the previous Member for Pembroke, Nick Bennett. We all know that elections are won or lost; we know also that many colleagues work very hard as Members of this place, and Nick Bennett certainly worked very hard for his constituency. I look forward as undoubtedly other hon. Members do to hearing from the hon. Gentleman in future.

I congratulate the hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) on securing this debate which is of considerable interest across the party Benches. There is concern about the use of orimulsion whether in his constituency power station or other power stations. That is why my hon. Friend the Member for Ribble Valley (Mr. Evans) is here beside me taking considerable interest in the proceedings on behalf of his constituents.

Orimulsion at Padiham has considerable interest for my constituents. As the hon. Member for Burnley said, some time last year there was a major incident with orimulsion at Richborough power station in Thanet, South which is close to the major town of Deal in my constituency. Some £6 million worth of motor cars were damaged with the result that there is considerable interest wherever orimulsion is burned.

The problem was first raised with me in my constituency last year. Since then I have raised the issue with Ministers, PowerGen and British Petroleum, and I have visited the BP chemicals operation at Sunbury where there is a very good video, which I commend to hon. Members, that explains a great deal about orimulsion. It would relieve many Members of their anxieties, some of which are unfounded when considered against the details. I am concerned that much of the detailed information about orimulsion has not come into the open. Many

[Mr. David Shaw]

aspects need to be explained to Members of Parliament and members of the public. I hope that the Minister can reassure us with information in his speech.

Last year I wrote both to the Minister and to Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution about orimulsion, hoping to secure a meeting with HMIP and believing that by now it might be an independent agency with some of the openness and benefits that such an arrangement brings. I was saddened that after considerable delay the reply came from the Minister's office, not HMIP. I hoped that the reply would fix a time and date for a meeting, but I am still waiting. I believe that it will be a ministerial meeting with HMIP present. I am not too fussed about the arrangements, but I want to have the benefit of questioning Ministers and HMIP at a meeting. I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Ribble Valley would like to be present as, I am sure, would other hon. Members to get at the facts.

I shall try to be as brief as I can. So far my research has shown that, although orimulsion has many plus factors, it has negative ones, too. The plus factors are that the fuel burns efficiently in small, nearly perfectly formed droplets. Because of that, the dust emissions appear to be considerably less and safer than those of other fuels, such as coal or oil A further advantage is that orimulsion results from British technology. I do not want to be particularly controversial, but I should chastise the Labour party a little. Labour Members often go on about the need for research and development, and one of the benefits of orimulsion is that it is the result of British research and development. BP has been successful in using its research and development with the Venezuelan Government and oil company to produce a fuel that has many benefits, although possible disadvantages. A further benefit is that large quantities of orimulsion are available at an acceptable price. Therefore, orimulsion brings benefits in terms of price and availability to the British economy.

The negative factor is that sulphur dioxide emissions can be considerable and that if inefficient procedures operate in the burning process, as happened at Richborough, there can be large amounts of sulphur trioxide. When mixed with water in the atmosphere, sulphur dioxide and sulphur trioxide produce sulphurous and sulphuric acids. A combination of those apparently produced the smut that landed on cars in Richborough. We must be concerned about those smuts in respect of the health of constituents.

I hope that, when replying, the Minister will mention the problems of HMIP and the aspects of commercial confidentiality that have been cited in letters to me and about which I am concerned. Much of the secrecy that normally operates in respect of commercially confidential information should be swept aside in this case and the files, including those of HMIP, should be opened up. Hon. Members should have the opportunity, on behalf of their constituents, to examine the matter fully.

I am glad to have had this opportunity to speak and I congratulate the hon. Member for Burnley on raising the subject.

10.11 pm

The Minister for the Environment and Countryside (Mr. David Maclean): This is one of those rare parliamentary occasions. The hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) said that he was surprised that a Minister from the Department of Trade and Industry would not be replying to the debate. I am from the Department of the Environment. I am glad that on this occasion a Minister of State is able to answer, because we are discussing an important subject. I am also happy to note that, a new hon. Member having made his maiden speech, the most senior Minister available in the House is able to congratulate him. I fulsomely congratulate the hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Ainger).

As my hon. Friend the Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw) said, many of us were good friends of Nick Bennett, who was an outstanding Member and a very good ministerial colleague. So I was glad to hear the hon. Member for Pembroke pay a warm tribute to him. I was also pleased with his remarks about his constituency. It is customary to say that one looks forward to hearing much more from a maiden speaker. On this occasion, I began to realise as he was speaking that he really knows the subject, whereas I have come to it new and have had to swot it up in recent weeks. The hon. Gentleman therefore will not take it amiss when I say that I hope that I shall not have to reply to him in future debates, considering that he is such a master of the subject. Others who do not have to reply to him will be pleased to hear his contributions. I congratulate him.

Mr. Pike: I intervene at this stage simply because none of my hon. Friends will have an opportunity in this debate to congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Pembroke (Mr. Ainger) on his maiden speech. We echo the Minister's comments. My hon. Friend made a fluent and well informed speech. At the same time, I commiserate with my hon. Friend the Member for Pendle (Mr. Prentice), who has been present throughout the debate but has not had an opportunity to speak. He was the only one of my hon. Friends present to whom I did not refer. I thought that he would have an opportunity to speak.

Mr. Maclean: I, too, regret that the hon. Gentleman did not have a chance to take part in the debate. It is clear from the number of hon. Members present for an Adjournment debate how much interest there is in the subject. My hon. Friend the Member for Ribble Valley (Mr. Evans) tackled me on the subject outside the Chamber, before the debate commenced. I appreciate that there is much concern about the issue.

I am grateful to the hon. Member for Burnley for raising the matter, although I suspect that many people outside, like me until a few days ago, would have said, if asked to give an opinion about orimulsion, that it was the latest home decorating product. For many others, particularly those living near power stations where the fuel is burnt, or where it is proposed to be burnt, it is a serious matter of deep current concern. So I am pleased to have this opportunity to reply to the debate.

We live in a world where the market for fuels is constantly changing. Since the oil crisis of the mid-1970s and the increases in oil prices and generally greater volatility of the oil markets that followed it, the choice of oil as a fuel for power generation has become increasingly unattractive, as hon. Members pointed out. That is especially significant because, unlike, say, road transport,

there are several other competing sources of energy which power generators can use. We have therefore seen a progressive decline in the utilisation of oil-fired power stations, such as Pembroke and Padlham, although they still play a part in the generation of our electricity.

Against that background, it is easy to understand the appeal of a new fuel, competitively priced against other fuels, available in large quantities and capable of being burned in oil-fired power stations with relatively minor modifications. Such, we gather, is the situation with orimulsion, a bitumen in water emulsion produced in Venezuela, where huge reserves are said to exist. That fuel is now being marketed around the world—in Europe under a joint venture with British Petroleum—with, as hon. Members said, some success.

However, if the world today is characterised by a lively, ever-changing energy market, it is also witnessing an upsurge of concern for the environment. Significantly, we are now less than a month away from one of the most important environmental events ever held, the Earth summit in Rio. We are seeing a welcome growth in environmental awareness and concern here and abroad, which is affecting more and more areas of our daily lives. It is quite right that that is the case.

Energy production is one such area. The days when we could produce power by burning whatever fuel was most easily and most cheaply available, with little regard to environmental effects, are mercifully long gone. But now, more than ever before, the environmental aspects of power generation are a central concern in the energy industry. It is therefore right that any proposal radically to change an aspect of the industry, especially one involving a new fuel source, should receive careful, thorough scrutiny from an environmental perspective. It is no accident that this debate is being answered tonight by an Environment Minister: it is a sign, I assure hon. Members, of the importance that the environment is playing in the consideration of this new fuel.

May I digress for a moment? I also assure hon. Gentlemen that we are proceeding with drafting our Environmental Agency Bill. It has not been put on the back burner, and we shall seek the earliest legislative opportunity to push ahead with it.

As a general rule, the electricity generators should be left to decide which fuels to burn and in what quantities. The hon. Gentleman may disagree with that philosophy, but subject to compliance with the non-fossil fuel orders, it is an operational matter for the companies. We now have a competitive electricity market with a number of new players. We also have a powerful regulator which oversees the operation of the market and safeguards the interests of consumers.

However, like all other large-scale industrial processes, power generation is a source of pollution. For example, power stations account for about 70 per cent. of the United Kingdom's major sources of sulphur dioxide, one of the main causes of acid rain. Another reason why I am pleased to answer this debate is that I represent Penrith and The Border in the Lake district, where we, too, know a bit about acid rain. It is vital to exert proper control over the industry, given its implications for the wider environment. Thanks to the actions of my predecessors, that is exactly what we now have.

The electricity generators, like other polluting industries, are subject to the rigorous system of integrated pollution control introduced under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 which is a unique first in Europe. It is no exaggeration to describe this as one of the toughest pollution control regimes in the world. It puts the United Kingdom at the forefront of environmental protection.

For example, we are playing a crucial part in the European Community's efforts to extend the principle of integrated pollution control throughout the EC. Pollution control knows no national boundaries. It cannot be artificially compartmentalised, especially when a single process may release pollutants into more than one medium. It therefore needs a broad, integrated approach, and that is exactly what we now have.

The hon. Gentleman and my hon. Friend spoke of the possible harmful effects of the burning of orimulsion. Even if I were able to, I am sure that the House would not thank me for going into a complex, technical explanation of the results of orimulsion combustion. I think that I could match the hon. Member for Pembroke on that. Thankfully, we have experts far better equipped to do so. However, I can confirm that, while on some counts orimulsion compares favourably with other fuels, it does give cause for concern on environmental grounds. In particular, the emission levels of some heavy metals, especially vanadium and nickel, are significantly higher than other fuels, and orimulsion does release more sulphur dioxide than other fuels per unit of energy produced.

It is therefore vital to ensure that any proposal to burn that fuel is carefully considered from the environmental perspective. I am happy to confirm that that is exactly what is happening. The combustion of fuels in power stations is one of the processes controlled by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution, under integrated pollution control, and no orimulsion—or, indeed, any other fuel —can be burned in any power station without its authority.

I am pleased to note that, despite the concerns voiced tonight, no one has questioned the integrity or the rigour of HMIP. I heard what my hon. Friend the Member for Dover said about a meeting, and I will consider that possibility. However, I want jealously to guard the independence of HMIP. If that means that I have to refuse meetings with Members of Parliament, I hope that the House will understand the valid reason for doing so.

The inspectorate has received applications from National Power to burn orimulsion at its Padiham and Pembroke power stations, and from PowerGen to continue to burn orimulsion at its Ince and Richborough power stations. I am grateful to the hon. Member for Pembroke for mentioning electrostatic precipitators. At Richborough, the requirement to use electrostatic precipitators means that particulate emissions are exactly half what they would be if the station were burning coal. Furthermore, HMIP has required total sulphur dioxide emissions from both Ince and Richborough to be no higher than they would have been if the power stations had been burning fuel oil at full load.

All those applications are currently under consideration. I cannot predict the outcome of the inspectorate's deliberations; indeed, it would be wrong of me to try. I have heard what has been said in the House tonight. I heard the comments about flue gas desulphurisation, but that is a matter for HMIP to determine. I am sure that the House will appreciate that, as any appeal would fall to be considered by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, it would be wrong of me to comment on the merits of the applications.

Mr. David Shaw: My hon. Friend has made a valid point about the independence of HMIP. However, I am still concerned to clarify with him the extent to which Members of Parliament can actually question and become involved, as some hon. Members have, in the technical details. I sense that on both sides of the House there is a desire by Members of Parliament, who may not be technically trained but who have some limited technical understanding, to get down to the details. Do we have access to HMIP or do we have to go through a Minister? How can we actually get at the details?

Mr. Maclean: Perhaps the best thing would be if I produced a note showing the status of HMIP. That might satisfy all hon. Members. All the data sent to the HMIP go into the public domain and its decisions go on to the public registers. Anyone is entitled to send information to it for consideration and deliberation before it comes to a decision. It might also be helpful if I describe in that note the relationship that Members of Parliament could have with HMIP.

Mr. Pike: Will the Minister give us an assurance that, if HMIP says that orimulsion cannot be burnt unless certain conditions are met and National Power, or PowerGen, says that it cannot afford to meet those conditions, it will not be overridden?

Mr. Maclean: There is an appeal system, which I cannot prejudice by giving any guarantee about whether something will or will not be burnt. I am certain that HMIP will not hesitate to stipulate the provisions of whatever pollution abatement equipment it considers necessary as one of the conditions of any authorisation it grants. In reaching this decision, HMIP has a duty to ensure that, for example, any statutory air quality standards are not exceeded.

Concern has particularly been expressed at the possible damage burning orimulsion might do to the environment, regardless of any abatement measures which HMIP may require. Indeed, the hon. Member for Burnley has argued that its importation and use by the power industry should simply not be allowed. As I have said, I cannot accept the imposition of blanket restrictions of this kind. Provided the protection of the environment is properly taken into account, the Government consider that the generators should be granted the freedom to operate in the marketplace, without such unnecessary interference. We take the dangers of polluting emissions very seriously indeed, and those who doubt this should examine our record on acid rain.

For various geographical and historical reasons, acid deposition and its harmful effects were not always recognised as a major problem in the United Kingdom. If we go back far enough in time, of course, the scientific understanding that we now have of such matters simply did not exist. We should take that point on board. Our island status and the measures, such as tall chimneys, taken to protect our main population centres meant that we did not always view this problem in quite the same way as some of our neighbours.

I am happy to report that those days are long gone. The United Kingdom is now playing a full part in international efforts to reduce the emissions which contribute to acid deposition. We have already made great progress. For example, our emissions of sulphur dioxide, one of the two main acid rain-causing gases, are down by almost 40 per cent. from 1970 levels. But we are not resting there—we agree that we need to do more.

We are therefore implementing fully the European Community's large combustion plants directive, under which we are committed to reducing our 1980 levels of emissions of sulphur dioxide by 60 per cent. by 2003 and of nitrogen oxides by 30 per cent. by 1998. The United Kingdom's national plan for implementation of the directive sets out specific annual emission limits for both National Power and PowerGen. I must stress that there is no question of the use of a new fuel such as orimulsion at a particular plant being allowed to cause the limits to be broken. Greenpeace's concerns are wrong.

Mr. Dobson: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Maclean: No, I must get on.

We have spoken about the public concern about proposals to burn orimulsion. I hope that what I have said this evening will offer some reassurance to those concerned about this issue. These applications will not go through on the nod. Under our new legislation, the applicants will have to conform to requirements that are tougher and more detailed than any that we have seen before. I can also confirm that public participation is another crucial element in our pollution control apparatus. National Power's applications for Pembroke and Padiham have been advertised to the public and put on public display.

A substantial number of representations have been received and the inspectorate will take these carefully into account in reaching decisions on the applications before it. If an authorisation is issued, it will be placed in the public registers—held by HMIP and the relevant local authority —as will key documents relating to the operation of the plant such as any monitoring data on releases to the environment which are required to be supplied to HMIP as a condition of authorisation.

I recognise that the proposal to burn orimulsion at Padiham—and elsewhere—is a cause of genuine concern in many quarters. I hope that what I have said will reassure some people. The electricity generators must be free to make operational decisions, but at the same time they must also meet rigorous environmental standards. Our pollution watchdog is scrutinising these applications and will insist——

The motion having been made at Ten o'clock and the debate having continued for half an hour, MADAM SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at half-past Ten o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 15 May 1992

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Road Safety

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Lightbown.]*

9.34 am

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. You will have noticed this morning, because it has been well advertised in the press and on television, that Olympia and York has now filed for bankruptcy. You have heard me call at least three times this week for a statement in the House by either the Secretary of State for the Environment or by the President of the Board of Trade to let us know that in no circumstances will taxpayers' money be allocated by the Government to that bankrupt firm. I have never received proper assurances. You will have heard the inconclusive exchanges the other day between me and the Secretary of State for the Environment.

I now call on the Government through you, Madam Speaker, to make it clear that if Olympia and York files for chapter 11 and bankruptcy proceedings, in no circumstances will the Government use taxpayers' money to bail out the company in the Canary Wharf development or anywhere else. We should have a statement here today to make that abundantly clear.

Madam Speaker: That is barely a point of order for the Chair. I inform the hon. Gentleman and the House that I have been given no indication that a Minister is about to make a statement. Those on the Treasury Bench will, of course, have heard what the hon. Gentleman has said.

Dr. Robert Spink (Castle Point): Further to the point of order, Madam Speaker. I should like to say that the information given this morning by the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner)——

Madam Speaker: Order. May I give a little guidance to the hon. Gentleman? A point of order must be a matter directly for the Chair. We cannot get into a debate on points of order. I have dealt with the matter now.

9.36 am

The Minister for Roads and Traffic (Mr. Kenneth Carlisle): I am truly delighted that my first opportunity to open a debate as Minister for Roads and Traffic should be on the vital subject of road safety. It is a matter to which the Government and I personally attach the highest importance, and I know that that sentiment is shared by the whole House.

Road safety is about people. Nine out of 10 casualty accidents involve human error and they are one of the most avoidable causes of human suffering—avoidable, that is, if only people would drive more carefully, obey road traffic law and follow the highway code. We are all road users in one way or another, as drivers, passengers, cyclists or pedestrians, and we all have a strong human interest in making our roads safer. It is of paramount importance to our constituents that they and their families should be able to travel safely on our roads. There is also an important economic interest at stake. Road accidents cost the country a staggering £6 billion a year.

I am committed to our drive to reduce casualties. Even one casualty is one too many, and this is a campaign on which we will not falter. That is why, in 1987, we set ourselves the target of reducing casualties by a third by the year 2000 compared with the average annual level for 1981-85. We are now five years into this programme. There is no room for complancency, but there are many encouraging signs.

The provisional casualty statistics for 1991 have recently been issued. They show that road deaths in 1991 were 13 per cent. down on the previous year and more than 19 per cent. down on the 1981-85 average. Just over 4,500 people were killed on our roads in 1991. That is the lowest figure since 1948 and the second lowest since 1925. It compares with almost 8,000 deaths in the worst years of the 1960s. Let me remind the House that there is nine times as much motor traffic on our roads today as there was in 1948.

By international standards, too, our record is good. Latest comparable figures show that for every 100,000 in the population, there are 10 road deaths a year in Great Britain compared with 13 in the western part of Germany, 18 in the United States of America and 20 in France. Ours is now the lowest fatality rate in the Common Market, but I must stress that it is still 4,500 deaths too many. Every road death is a major tragedy for the victim's family and friends.

Serious injury accidents can be almost as devastating, in many cases leaving those involved physically or mentally scarred for life. It is particularly good news that the number of those fell by nearly 15 per cent. between 1990 and 1991—and 1990 was a relatively good year. For serious injuries, we have almost reached the target with a reduction of over 30 per cent. since the base years of 1981 to 1985. So we are making fair progress on the most serious casualties. However, we still have a long way to go on the overall casualty target, which is only 3 per cent. down on the baseline. That is largely attributable to a growth in slight casualties among car users, which appears to reflect the growth in traffic of more than 40 per cent. since the base years 1981 to 1985.

One may ask whether those dramatically lower casualty figures are really a significant long-term trend or merely a "blip", a fortuitous piece of good luck, which will soon reverse itself. Some have claimed, for example, that road accidents always go down in a recession and will increase as soon as the economy picks up.

Against this, I can point out only that, despite the recession, the level of traffic on our roads has not fallen —indeed, there was 3 per cent. more traffic in 1991 than in 1990. The improvement can no longer be written off as short term. The number of deaths and serious injuries has now fallen in six successive quarters compared with the corresponding quarters of the previous years. So there are good grounds for optimism, although none for complacency.

As I have said, human error is the most common cause of road accidents, so the cornerstone of our strategy to improve road safety is encouraging better conduct by

[Mr. Kenneth Carlisle]

drivers and riders on our roads. We can do this by education and publicity campaigns, but better enforcement and stiffer penalties are also necessary ingredients.

The highway code is an invaluable teaching aid for all road users. We are reaching the final stages of preparation of a completely revised edition—the first major revision since 1978. The more detailed "Driving Manual", long recognised as a key reference book, has also been completely revised, and a new edition will be published later this month.

Publicity campaigns play an important role in helping to reinforce legislation and improve attitudes and driver behaviour. Our current publicity programme is largely directed at two major areas—drinking and driving and child road safety. I shall have more to say later about our success in changing attitudes to drinking and driving.

The child safety campaign aims to reduce the number of children killed or seriously injured on our roads, in particular by encouraging motorists to reduce their speed in urban areas where children are likely to be around. The first child road safety campaign was launched in May 1990. Changing attitudes, and translating those changes into improved behaviour, is a slow process. The campaign must be maintained for a number of years before its full benefit is felt, but research shows that it is already having some effect on driver attitudes. I know that the whole House will support this campaign to protect our children.

The majority of drivers will respond to well-focused publicity and modify their behaviour if they are fully aware of the risks. Unfortunately, though, there is a minority who appear to enjoy taking risks or who are totally unconcerned about the danger they cause to themselves and others. Behavioural research funded by the Department is aimed at improving our understanding of this type of driver. We hope that it will point the way to some positive policies for reducing the risk they pose to themselves and others, but for some, it seems that stiff penalties may be the only answer.

There has been much public outcry about certain cases in which the courts have been unable to impose the highest penalties on drivers who have caused death or serious injury because of the difficulty in proving a charge of "recklessness". That was a central concern of the committee chaired by Dr. Peter North in the mid-1980s, and it recommended that the most serious driving offences should be reformulated.

That has now been done in the Road Traffic Act 1991, much of which was based on the North committee's recommendations. Those provisions will come into force on 1 July this year. The new offences of "dangerous driving" and "causing death by dangerous driving" are constructed in such a way that the court's decision will be based more on the objective standard of driving than on the driver's state of mind. I hope that this will lead to much severer penalties being imposed where the appalling standard of driving justifies that.

Another important change the new Act will make is that drivers convicted of the "dangerous driving" offences will be ordered to take a double-length driving test before regaining a full driving licence. Courts will also have the discretion to require a re-test—in the more serious cases a double-length one—where a driver is convicted of other endorsable offences. The longer test will provide more opportunity to examine the attitude of the driver in a variety of traffic situations, as well as driving skills as such.

In looking at the main behavioural causes of road accidents, two factors clearly predominate—speed and drink. Attitudes to drinking and driving have greatly improved in recent years, but we are all aware that speed limits are still widely ignored. Yet, as other causes of accident are gradually reduced, speed emerges ever more clearly as the main killer on the roads of the 1990s.

We have all heard the expression "speed kills", but just how literally true that is was brought home to many people by last year's excellent campaign on the subject, "Kill your speed, not a child". That showed vividly the difference of impact on a child pedestrian of vehicles travelling at 20, 30 or 40 mph—literally it is the difference between life and death. At 40 mph, most children are killed; at 20 mph, most live.

Research shows that, in between 22 and 32 per cent. of accidents, excessive speed is a contributory factor. Accidents at speed are more likely to result in death or serious injury. It is a sobering thought that it has been estimated that a 1 mph reduction in average speed across the board could save around 8 per cent. of all injury accidents and around 11 per cent. of fatal accidents.

Therefore, it is essential that we have the right speed limits for different classes of roads. My right hon. and learned Friend, the previous Secretary of State for Transport, confirmed in July 1991 that the top national speed limit would remain 70 mph. I am pleased that the Association of Chief Police Officers now supports our decision.

We have recently issued a consultation paper on the guidelines we give local authorities in setting local speed limits on roads for which they are responsible. We are proposing that local authorities should have greater freedom to take account of the environment through which the road passes. That has been widely welcomed, and we shall shortly be issuing revised guidance, taking account of the many comments received.

The main problem about speed limits, of course, is how to enforce them. The Road Traffic Act 1991 has replaced the flat rate of three penalty points for speeding with a range from three to six points, which a magistrates court may impose according to the severity of the offence. That means that, in future, a driver may lose his licence on the basis of only two serious speeding convictions.

The main enforcement problem is catching the offender in the first place. Here, technology can help, in the form of automatic cameras. Some police forces are already using this sort of camera to detect drivers who cross on red traffic lights. It has proved a remarkably effective exercise, not only in bringing offenders to book, but also in deterring others. As these cameras become more widely used, we hope that drivers will regard every traffic light as a potential camera site. That would produce significant accident savings.

The legislative changes in the Road Traffic Act 1991 will enable us to take a similar approach to the problem of speeding, and these measures come into effect in July. Evidence from type-approved camera equipment will no longer need to be corroborated by a policeman on the spot. We are hoping for the same sort of success we have achieved with red light cameras, particularly in terms of deterring people from speeding. The acid test will be

whether the introduction of cameras reduces speed and accidents. From our experience with red light cameras, we have every reason to be optimistic.

Apart from speed, the other form of road user behaviour that causes an alarming number of accidents is driving under the influence of alcohol. This is not only illegal but utterly selfish and dangerous. Fortunately, the message seems finally to be getting through. The number of people killed in drink-related accidents has more than halved over the past 12 years. This suggests that we are beginning to reap the benefits of years of patient campaigning and education and that the attitude of society is itself changing. But drink-related accidents still account for some 800 deaths, so it is important that we maintain the momentum.

The Government's publicity campaigns alone would not have had such a dramatic effect without the widespread support that they have received. I should particularly like to acknowledge the contribution of the police, who have trebled the level of breath testing in the past 10 years, and of the drinks industry, which has promoted low-alcohol and alcohol-free drinks.

It is gratifying that the general level of driving over the limit is going down, but, as we know, there is still a hard core of heavy drinkers. Some may have a medical dependence on alcohol and should not be allowed to drive at all. The high-risk offenders scheme, which was extended in June 1990, imposes additional medical checks on repeat offenders or those convicted at very high blood-alcohol levels. They cannot regain their licences until they have satisfied the Department's medical experts that they are no longer alcohol dependent.

The Road Traffic Act created a new offence of causing death by careless driving while unfit through drink or drugs. This will carry the same maximum penalty—five years imprisonment—as the offence of causing death by dangerous driving.

Some drink-drivers need help as well as the deterrence of legal penalties. Much useful pioneering work has been done by the probation service and the voluntary sector on rehabilitating drink-drivers and others with a drinking habit that gets out of control. The Road Traffic Act provides a power to conduct a large-scale experiment in rehabilitation courses for drink-drive offenders.

Under this scheme, an offender can earn remission on the period of disqualification by attending and completing an approved course. I emphasise that this is not a soft option. It will require attendance for about 16 to 20 hours, and the offender will be required to pay the course fee. It offers the possibility of bringing about a permanent change in behaviour which cannot be achieved by penalties alone. The experiment will be well worth watching, and I shall do so with great care. It may have wider applications.

For the experimental period, this scheme will operate in certain parts of the country only. If the experiment shows that rehabilitation courses are effective, the scheme will be extended throughout Great Britain. This will require an affirmative statutory instrument, so Parliament will be fully involved in the decision. The experiment is, of necessity, over a long period, so it will be a few years before the debate takes place.

Although I have concentrated on measures to improve road user behaviour, road safety can also be improved by better design of vehicles and roads. These are areas in which steady progress has been made for a number of years.

One important recent development in vehicle safety has been the compulsory fitting of speed limiters on lorries as well as coaches. I have already spoken of excessive speed as a major factor in accidents, and the impact of heavy vehicles at speed is particularly severe. For some years now, all new coaches capable of travelling at 70 mph have had to be fitted with speed limiters, and retrofitting of older coaches is, I am glad to say, now complete.

From August this year, all new goods vehicles over 7·5 tonnes will also be fitted with speed limiters, and a retrofitting programme for the heaviest vehicles already in use will end in 1993. This will result in considerable fuel savings and environmental benefits in addition to the much-needed road safety benefits.

Another substantial recent step has been the extension to rear seats of the requirement to wear seat belts which are fitted and available. Rear seat belt wearing was made compulsory for children in 1989 and for adults last July. The combined effect of these changes could be a reduction of at least 100 fatal and 1,000 serious injuries a year. Wearing rates by drivers and front seat passengers in this country are among the highest in the world. In post-1987 cars, rear belts are now worn by almost 90 per cent. of children and almost 60 per cent. of adults. The rate for adults has more than doubled since wearing was made compulsory. It is clear that more and more passengers recognise the value of using seat belts.

Further progress on vehicle manufacturing standards depends crucially on securing agreement within the European Community, since no member state can unilaterally lay down standards which would form a barrier to trade. As we all know, getting agreement can be a long and tortuous process, but the United Kingdom is pushing hard on a number of fronts, and some good progress has recently been made.

Although progress on car standards moves slowly, manufacturers could do more at the design stage to improve safety. Consumers are becoming more aware of safety issues, and several large manufacturers are vigorously marketing the safety aspects of their models. Gone are the days when it was said in the advertising world, "Safety doesn't sell".

We intend to maintain this momentum by providing the consumer with safety statistics on makes and models of cars. This week we published the second of our reports on "Car and Driver: Injury Accidents and Casualty Rates" which gives information on how well cars protect their occupants. As more information becomes available we shall follow this up with further publications to assist the consumer in making informed decisions when buying a car.

For vehicle safety, Governments and the Community can only set standards and regulate, but the trunk road network is a direct responsibility of the Government. As well as providing mobility, as roads are the arteries of the nation, the roads programme makes a substantial contribution to road safety. New roads, purpose built to modern standards, are far safer than the ones that they replace. They also make a welcome diversion of traffic away from less suitable, lower quality roads. The scope for accident reduction is one of the factors taken into account in selecting schemes for the national trunk road programme.

Trunk roads carry about 30 per cent. of all traffic, but only about 10 per cent. of accidents occur on them, and the casualty rate on motorways is only one fifth that of other

[Mr. Kenneth Carlisle]

roads. But the volume of traffic is growing more quickly on these roads than on others, so achieving casualty reductions here is a real challenge. We are making a determined effort, and we now require all the Department's new roads to be subject to a full safety audit. Best estimates are that the road programme will save about 80,000 casualties cumulatively over this decade.

On existing trunk roads we have completed a major programme of gap closures. Since the casualty reduction target was set, we have installed around 1,000 miles of central reserve fencing on dual carriageway trunk roads.

However, almost three quarters of all casualties occur on local roads, and I cannot stress too much how we welcome the support and commitment of local authorities to road safety. Following the guidance given by the local authority associations in their excellent code of practice for road safety, almost all local highway authorities have now prepared their own local safety plans setting out the way in which they seek to improve road safety across their whole area of responsibility.

Some of the most impressive casualty savings can be achieved by relatively minor and inexpensive measures to remove a specific source of danger. These are commonly known as local safety schemes. The majority are carried out on local authority roads and the latest transport supplementary grant settlement allocated over £42 million for this purpose. The combined grant allocations for 1991-92 and for this year will allow local authorities to build around 7,700 local safety schemes nationally. They should save about 170 lives and prevent 2,200 serious injuries and 9,000 other casualties in any 12-month period. The same techniques are used to improve black spots on the trunk road network.

A very promising development in recent years has been the specification of a road hierarchy in urban areas to get traffic on to a network designed for vehicles and away from the residential areas where people live and children play. This has permitted the use of design and engineering measures to reduce the speed of drivers on these purely residential roads.

It is estimated that this approach, which was developed by the Transport Research Laboratory, can save up to 13 per cent. of all injury accidents in the areas treated. I am glad that my hon. Friend the Member for Epping Forest (Mr. Norris) is with me on the Front Bench today, because, as the new Under-Secretary with responsibility for these matters in London, he is taking many of these measures forward with his usual verve. I know that he will have much to contribute to this campaign.

Road humps have proved to be one of the most effective ways of calming traffic in residential areas. In 1990, we simplified the regulations to make them easier to introduce and less expensive. More recently, a small legislative change in the Road Traffic Act 1991 will increase the scope for non-standard humps to be approved.

There are, however, a number of other engineering techniques for calming traffic, such as chicanes and road narrowings. Until recently, local authorities have been reluctant to use these because of doubts about their legal status. I hope that these will now be resolved thanks to the new Traffic Calming Act 1992, which happily just received Royal Assent before Dissolution.

I must pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Wyre (Mr. Mans) who introduced that legislation as a private Member's Bill in the last Session. I am sorry that he is not with us today, but he has given me an understandable excuse for that. Since going to the Department, I have come to realise what a contribution his private Member's Bill will make to safety. It was a tremendous effort to get his Bill through before Dissolution.

Mr. Ian Taylor (Esher): I entirely endorse my hon. Friend's comments about the efforts of my hon. Friend the Member for Wyre (Mr. Mans). I was fortunate enough to be a sponsor of the Bill. However, will my hon. Friend note that many of the authorities responsible for the implementation of these more interesting traffic-calming measures are now claiming that they have problems with resources? Although I am not requesting further Government funding, should not councils give higher priority to the implementation of such schemes, in the interests of pedestrians and other road users?

Mr. Carlisle: My hon. Friend makes an interesting point. As I said, we are giving substantial sums for local safety measures—about £42 million a year. That is ring-fenced, so it has to be used on such measures. Obviously, as we introduce and persuade people to take traffic-calming measures, the input that local authorities have to make is paramount. We shall have to carry this forward with real energy. I assure him that I intend to do that, because I see traffic-calming measures as the most effective way not only to improve safety but to make residential areas better to live in. I pay tribute to the part that my hon. Friend played in getting the Bill through Parliament.

It is also important to try to reduce speed in residential areas, and some of the measures that I have described have been used to good effect in the new 20 mph zones. Some 27 of these have now been authorised, and there are more in the pipeline. All in all, this is solid progress from which we can derive some satisfaction. The improvement in casualty figures from 1990 to 1991 was the best for 50 years. Our road safety record is excellent by international standards, and I have mentioned a number of other measures which are about to come in or are very recent, which should improve road safety even more.

However, we cannot be complacent. With traffic continuing to grow, we cannot afford any relaxation in our efforts. It has been said that the price of freedom is eternal vigilance. Similarly, the price of safer roads is ceaseless activity. I can assure the House that we shall take all steps necessary to achieve the casualty reduction target for the year 2000, and if possible to go even further in reducing this senseless waste of life and limb.

I am particularly concerned at the level of road casualties among young people. Young, newly qualified drivers represent only 10 per cent. of all licence holders, but they account for 20 per cent. of driver casualties. They are involved in accidents which result in 1,000 road deaths each year. Many young people drive carefully and responsibly, but there are others who consider good driving to be fast and aggressive rather than safe. Some important research is being carried out in this area and in the light of this I shall be looking carefully at what can be done to reduce the unnecessarily high rate of casualties among this age group.

I have no doubt that many hon. Members are hoping to take part in the debate and, as a new Minister to this subject, I shall listen with great care and particular interest, and certainly with an open mind, to the points they make. As the Minister for Roads and Traffic, I am already aware that I have inherited a programme of impressive work. One of my highest ambitions is to drive this work forward and to strive to my utmost ability to make our roads ever safer.

10.8 am

Ms. Joan Ruddock (Lewisham, Deptford): I begin by welcoming you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to your new position. May I also be the first to congratulate the Minister on his appointment to his new post?

These debates on road safety have become an annual event, in which the Minister tells the House all the good things that the Government are doing. We applaud proven achievements, but, despite the welcome news that death and injury figues fell in 1991 as compared to 1990, there is a fundamental weakness in the Government's approach. Road safety primarily concerned with the interaction between private cars, cyclists and pedestrians is only part of the general issue of transport safety. Huge sums of money are being spent on rail and undergound safety, two modes of transport with far better accident records than road-borne transport.

Have the Government made any analysis of any overall evaluation of transport safety and the return on moneys invested in various modes? Might it not be the case that such an analysis would reveal that public transport has a far better safety record than the use of private cars and might suggest some new perspectives in thinking about road safety?

Perhaps the new Minister will take more seriously than his predecessor the potential disaster inherent in the predictions that the number of vehicles on our roads will double by 2025. Surely such an increase in road-borne transport would be bound to affect road safety seriously. Surely any objective analysis of transport safety would dictate that there should be a major effort to shift people from modes of private transport to public transport.

I welcome the reduction in road accidents and I hope that the downward trend continues and that all agencies involved in road transport matters are given encouragement, support and appropriate resources to continue that vital work. I note the decrease in motor cycle accident rates and believe that the introduction of compulsory basic training for all learner cyclists, which we supported, must have been a significant factor in that welcome change. I also pay tribute to the industry for its research into design improvments, such as better braking, tyres and suspension.

However, as the Minister acknowledged, the good news cannot hide the fact that too many people are being killed or injured on our roads. I remind the House that last year there were 4,520 deaths in road accidents in Britain and more than 300,000 injuries. We all agree that that level is unacceptable.

Some sections of the population are considerably more at risk than others, and the Government must do more to deal with that. Older pedestrians are twice as likely to be killed on the road as other adults on foot. In 1989, nearly half of all pedestrians killed on the roads were more than 60 years old. Children are also at risk, road accidents being the leading cause of death for school age children. Most shockingly, road accidents are the cause of one in three male deaths between the ages of 15 and 24—a matter to which the Minister alluded in his closing remarks.

As a priority, we ought to be trying to ensure that the message of road safety reaches those young drivers, especially young male drivers—drivers aged between 17 and 20 are twice as likely to have a road accident as people in the 31 to 40 year age group.

Since our last debate, there has been much activity, both by the Government and by others, and most significant is the primary legislation that occupied us last year—the Road Traffic Act 1991, which is relevant and to which the Minister referred. While we strongly opposed part II of the Act, as I shall explain later, we supported the provisions in part I. I agree with the Minister that, once fully implemented, that Act will make a major contribution to reducing casualties on our roads. As he said, the new offence of dangerous driving will be easier to establish, as it is assessed on driver behaviour and not the driver's state of mind.

I am also pleased that there is a new offence on the statute book of causing death by careless driving while drunk. The Minister may not know that we pressed hard for that offence to be widened to include serious injury, but the Government refused to compromise.

We also supported another measure to which the Minister referred, the fitting of cameras to catch red light violators and those speeding on motorways. Those are two useful devices which I hope will act as much as a deterrent as a detector. I was pleased to hear the Government's account of what has been happening to red light camera detection, which is already in force.

Valuable though the 1991 Act is, it is deficient in some respects. The main area of deficiency is its omissions. Inexplicably, we once again failed to put on the statute book the introduction of random breath testing. Perhaps the Minister does not appreciate the vital importance of that issue, and the strength of the arguments put by the proponents of random breath testing. Although he has probably not yet had the chance to do so, I hope that he will find time to meet the British Medical Association, the Consumers Association, the Association of Police Surgeons of Great Britain and the National Federation of Women's Institutes—to name but a few—all of which support the introduction of random breath testing. Perhaps the Minister has a more open mind than his predecessor.

One of the problems of advancing arguments is the lack of recent research. I was encouraged to read—I hope that the Minister knows about this—that the Prime Minister ordered studies into drink driving in February this year. Would the Minister tell the House what progress is being made on that study? Drink-driving accidents kill 800 road users each year and injure 20,000, half of whom have not been drinking and driving.

Government research shows that more than 40 per cent. of people who admitted to drinking and driving believed that the chances of being caught were small, and they are right. The chances of detection range from one in 250 trips in some areas to one in 4,000 trips in others. It is true that there has been a reduction in the proportion of drivers killed who are over the legal limit, to around 19 per cent., but the level is still too high and we must not be complacent.

[Ms. Joan Ruddock]

Above all, drivers need to be persuaded that the chances of their being caught are high. There needs to be an effective deterrent, and it does not exist at present. Overseas experience, in New South Wales for example, shows that, where perceptions of being caught were low, high-profile random breath testing could act as a powerful deterrent to drinking and driving. Reductions of about 35 per cent. were recorded there, with savings amounting to 20 times the cost of implementing the measures.

Random breath testing, as proposed by the Opposition, involves the establishment of roadside checkpoints where the police can check for excess alcohol. It does not involve giving the police unfettered powers, which could lead to an infringement of civil liberties. It would be a highly publicised, high-profile deterrent, and it has public support. Surveys conducted during the past three years show that 70 per cent. of the public support that measure.

We still firmly believe that the introduction of random breath testing could lead to a sharp drop in drink-driving and could add to the considerable successes which have already been recorded in this country. I hope that the new Minister will have a more open mind on that issue, because it remains critical to road safety.

In our previous debate on road safety, the then Minister approved regulations to introduce the compulsory wearing of seat belts in the rear seats of cars—a measure which we have supported for some time and to which the Minister referred today. He said that the fact that we were approaching a figure of 60 per cent. of adults wearing rear seat belts was a great success, but that leaves 40 per cent.

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham): Sixty per cent.?

Ms. Ruddock: Specifically it is 58 per cent., and that allows for a 40 per cent. improvement. On every occasion that I have taken a taxi from this place which was fitted with rear seat belts and have fitted the belt before leaving, the taxi driver has told me that, in his experience, I am the only Member of Parliament to do so. If any hon. Members present in the Chamber today can say that they do so——

The Minister for Transport in London (Mr. Steve Norris): I always wear them.

Mrs. Ruddock: The Minister now has the benefit of a ministerial car and may not be taking taxis. Among taxi drivers who come to the precincts of the Palace of Westminster, it is certainly a common opinion that Members do not wear rear seat belts. I urge them all to set the best example and do so consistently.

The Traffic Calming Act 1992 was also passed in the last Session and, as the Minister and I acknowledge that it is a significant Act. I congratulate the hon. Member for Wyre (Mr. Mans) on piloting the Bill so skilfully through its various stages in the House. The Act allows local authorities far greater flexibility to implement measures to calm traffic—to slow it down in urban and residential areas. Together with the Government's recent announcement that local authorities may vary local speed limits and the establishment of several 20 mph zones, there will be a considerable improvement. These measures are particularly relevant to our concerns about accidents to two-wheeled travellers—cyclists and motor cyclists—and pedestrians.

Although the figures for those categories have indeed fallen, our record for those modes, unlike car transport, compares less well with that of other European countries. In many other European countries, it is safer, and indeed pleasanter, to walk and cycle. As the Minister acknowledged, one of the principal problems of our roads is excess speed. The Parliamentary Advisory Council for Transport Safety reports that work by the Transport Research Laboratory shows that about 10 per cent. of drivers involved in accidents are going too fast for the conditions.

The Minister has said that he will shortly issue revised guidance on speed. Will he look carefully at the PACTS leaflet on reducing road injuries caused by speed? It lists sensible measures, such as changing public attitudes through publicity campaigns and discouraging the high rating given by the press and advertisers of the top speed and performance of new cars. That advertising of the cult of speed is a major problem in changing attitudes. I demand of the Minister that more work is done on that.

PACTS also draws attention to the need to ensure that local authorities are properly resourced to carry out their vital safety work. It is on this point that I should like specifically to address the concerns that we share with the Association of Metropolitan Authorities about recent changes in the allocation of resources for local authority capital expenditure on transport. Only 7 per cent. of those resources can now be spent entirely on the basis of local discretion—the so-called headroom allocation. That has a direct bearing on local authority programmes for street lighting, traffic-calming measures with environmental objectives, locations with accident records and initiatives aimed at improving conditions for pedestrians and cyclists.

Will the Minister look closely at the AMA's arguments for increasing headroom? Will he acknowledge that, if the 1991 level of headroom were to be restored in real terms over the next three years, resources of £220 million would become available in the 1992-93 settlement? Surely the Minister must acknowledge—indeed, this morning one of his colleagues almost pressed this upon him—that resources in this area must be increased and that they have a positive effect on road safety. If he will not acknowledge or be persuaded that resources should be increased, what is his attitude to the alternative approach of changing the balance of local transport capital settlements more in favour of headroom and away from named major projects and earmarked initiatives?

I now turn to a more controversial aspect of transport planning which is highly relevant to road safety in London. I am delighted to see the Minister for Transport in London in his place, because I refer to red routes. The predecessor of the Minister for Roads and Traffic made great play of the reduced casualty rates along the pilot route. There was a 36 per cent. decrease compared with decreases of 12 per cent. over London as a whole and 11 per cent. in Islington as a whole. I welcome those reductions in the casualty figures, but more caution should be exercised in making claims for the red routes.

Surveys show an average increase in traffic flows of 8 per cent.—that is, more traffic along the pilot route—compared with a 1·6 per cent. decrease in London's general traffic. The speed of traffic in the pilot area has increased by 12 per cent. in the southbound direction and by 29 per cent. in the northbound direction. A survey by

Haringey council shows that the average speed on Archway road has increased from 30 mph, the legal limit on that road, to 37 mph.

As many more cars are travelling faster on the roads, it is likely that pedestrians now perceive the roads to be more dangerous, and so exercise greater care when crossing. Although we welcome that greater care and the reduction in accidents, we are afraid that this may be a short-term response and that increasing frustration and difficulties in crossing the road will lead to more serious accidents on these routes. The Government have consistently acknowledged that faster speed is a problem for road safety. Speeds increasing as a result of red routes pose new dangers.

Mr. John Bowis (Battersea): I am sure that the hon. Lady is right. Will she also acknowledge that the experiment included 17 new or improved pedestrian crossing points, and that that must be an integral part of any such plan? It was on the route she describes, and I hope that it will be on any other routes in London.

Ms. Ruddock: The hon. Gentleman makes a good point. I acknowledge that, if a road becomes more difficult to cross because of increased speed and traffic flows, there must be more pedestrian crossings. He will appreciate that, when the Government plan to introduce 300 miles of red routes, such a proportion of additional crossings will undoubtedly become a major problem and will defeat the increased speeds and so on. I am outlining the paradox here for the benefit of the House. It reflects seriously on potential road safety and future problems. The Government are not proposing to give the 300-mile network the same sort of financial support for all the additional measures, such as pedestrian crossings, entry-route treatments and traffic-calming treatments, that are in the pilot route.

Mr. Jessel: Can the hon. Lady please enlarge on that point, because I am not sure that I have understood her clearly? She seems to be saying that, because traffic is moving faster on red routes, pedestrians are more careful and the safety record is improving, but that in future the same pedestrians may change their minds and disregard the faster traffic, so dangers will increase. Why should they?

Ms. Ruddock: All the reports and local surveys suggest that there is a huge amount of frustration in the local neighbourhood as people try to go about their everyday life—shopping and moving about—with a red route crossing through the community. Although there has been an attempt to deal with the frustration and difficulties, by the provision of pedestrian crossings, in the pilot scheme, that is unlikely to happen on the Government's proposed 300-mile network.

My other point is that, although at this stage we see a reduction in accidents and more caution, it may be too early to make that positive assessment and believe that it will continue. We all know that, in an accident, the speed of the vehicle is extremely important in terms of the degree of injury that results. As the Minister explained, at certain speeds people are unlikely to be killed. If speed is increased by 10 mph, a pedestrian colliding with a vehicle will with certainty be killed. These are important matters, and I bring them to the House for serious consideration.

There is a flaw in the Government's claim to promote road safety and traffice calming when they also propose 300 miles of speeded-up traffic through shopping and residential areas. I am particularly concerned about the effect of the 300-mile network on people with disabilities. I am sure that the Minister's advisers will be familiar with the essential principles laid down by the Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation and with representations of the Greater London Association for Disabled People.

Increased traffic speeds and the present lack of provision of pedestrian crossings have a disproportionate effect on the disabled. Will the Minister confirm that the Department does not have figures for the number of pedestrian casualties accounted for by those who suffer from various disabilities? My understanding is that such figures are not available—but if they are, I shall be delighted to know of them.

Will the Minister undertake to examine the question of road safety in respect of the disabled? I raise that in the context of red routes in London, but impress on the Minister the wider concern for the safety of the disabled on all our roads. Is the Minister aware also of the views of the Royal National Institute for the Blind, which suggests a number of key action points to benefit the visually impaired?

The RNIB takes the view that research should be undertaken into the number of accidents involving visually impaired pedestrians and the causes of those accidents. The institute believes that the use of tactile paving and of audible and tactile signals at pedestrian crossings ought to be mandatory and not discretionary. It also believes that the guidelines on the installation of drop curves, traffic-calming systems, and shared facilities should also be made mandatory, not advisory.

As to pavement parking, many organisations argue that the present law ought to be clarified and enforced. Excavations, road works—those famous holes in the road—and the lack of overall maintenance are all aspects which specifically concern the disabled. Unfenced road works present a hazard to us all, but particularly to the blind and visually impared. I hope that the Minister, in the enthusiasm that he must have for his new job, will consider those aspects, to which far too little attention has been paid.

If road safety and care for the environment were at the heart of the Government's road safety policies, they would not be proposing 300 miles of red routes for London. No amount of packaging red routes, giving buses a little more space, or adding pedestrian crossings can disguise that the purpose of the routes is to facilitate through traffic. If road safety were to be put first, a different network would emerge that prioritised buses and non-motorised forms of transport over car users.

Recently, the EC Environment Minister suggested for a club of cities with car-free zones. The scheme, "Cities without Cars", aims at encouraging individual cities to tackle exhaust emissions, improve environmental quality by cutting down on car use and exclude cars entirely from certain zones. There is some interest in those suggestions among local authorities in this country, if not among people in this Chamber. I hope that we will learn in due course of the Minister's response to them.

The EC scheme shows that the debate on road safety ought not to be confined to questions involving collisions between vehicles and between vehicles and pedestrians and

[Ms. Ruddock]

cyclists. It is time to broaden the road safety debate and to acknowledge that the environment ought to form part of it.

The impact of roads on their local communities, and on the level of noise and air pollution, threatens to endanger the quality of people's lives. Pollution in London often reaches crisis proportions, yet when, last December, it achieved its worst level since records began in 1976, the Government simply asked people to stay at home or to cut down on their driving. The Government did not and do not have a systematic system of air pollution monitoring. We impress on them the need to introduce such a scheme, and to be prepared to take real action where air pollution limits are exceeded.

Mr. Bowis: The hon. Lady makes an important point about air pollution, but does she not accept that the worst examples often occur at the worst traffic jams? When cars are holed up in big traffic jams and pump out their exhaust fumes into the atmosphere, that creates a worse situation than traffic that is running smoothly. Although red routes are not the whole answer, but only part of a package of traffic-calming measures, they can serve to draw traffic out of the rat runs in side streets, as the experiment proved, and stop the concentration of car exhaust pollution—which is a menace to those who live along what should be free-flowing main routes through London.

Ms. Ruddock: The hon. Gentleman's suggested solution is far too simplistic. If vehicle numbers increase at the rate that the Department predicts, any possible benefits of a smoother traffic flow would be negated. The hon. Gentleman is right to say that the exhaust fumes pumped out by stationary vehicles are a major factor in air pollution, but the increase in vehicle numbers accounts for most of it. Some industries have dealt very well with air pollution, as we did domestically with coal fires many years ago, but we remain plagued by the problem of car exhaust fumes. Making provision for vehicles to travel faster through London is not the answer.

Also, the more that motorists perceive that it is possible to drive quickly through London, the more they will be encouraged to use their vehicles. It is not enough to take account of individual factors—a more comprehensive approach is needed.

My penultimate point concerns the role of education. In every transport debate in which I have participated, I have called for the topic to form part of the national curriculum. Some 85 per cent. of secondary schools and two thirds of primary schools have no structured road safety education programme. That is disgraceful, when one considers the road casualty rate among children and young people. It is obvious that consistent road safety education at all stages in childhood ought to be a primary concern. The Government must devote more resources and effort to ensuring that topic is taught to all children—and the most effective way would be to include it in the national curriculum.

I remind the Government that, despite their many good initiatives, nothing can replace a comprehensive transport strategy that has road safety, environment and people at its heart—which would transform Britain's appalling traffic congestion problems and improve people's lives immeasurably.

Mr. Jessel: The hon. Lady suggests that road safety should form part of the national curriculum, but surely Labour opposes a national curriculum.

Ms. Ruddock: I fear that the hon. Gentleman has failed to follow any education debate in the House. He is totally incorrect.

I repeat that such a strategy—with road safety, the environment and people's needs at its heart—would transform Britain's appalling problems of congestion and improve the quality of people's lives. Welcome and useful though the many road safety measures of which we have heard are, I warn the House that their effectiveness will diminish as the crisis of congestion and increased traffic on our roads continues.

The Government must face the fact that we cannot build our way out of congestion. A new approach is needed, but Ministers have not outlined such an approach this morning. We must take lessons from other European cities—cities that have promoted public transport, discouraged the use of cars and encouraged walking and cycling and environmentally friendly streets.

The Government's transport strategy needs to be transformed. I hope that the House will take note of the fact that we need to find that new approach rather than continuing to have annual debates within the present narrow limits.

10.40 am

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham): I welcome the fact that the debate is taking place so early in the new Parliament, which was elected only last month. That proves that the Government attach great importance to the subject of road safety.

I have a very personal interest in this, because my five-year-old daughter was killed in a motorway crash in 1975.

I have listened with great interest to the debate. My hon. Friend the Minister referred to the reductions in the number of deaths that have occurred in recent years. It must count as a considerable achievement nationally that, by last year, road deaths had fallen to 4,520, representing a drop of about one quarter during the 1980s. The figure was about 6,000 in 1980, 7,000 in 1970 and 8,000 in 1960. There has been a long-term reduction, but the figure fell faster in the 1980s than in previous decades. That no doubt owes something to the seat belt and drink-driving legislation. The hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms. Ruddock) was less than generous in her recognition of the very substantial achievement that has taken place particularly in the last decade.

The hon. Lady also referred to the need to link environmental issues with road safety. In a sense, that is already being done, because, in general, when a bypass or new motorway is constructed, the casualty rate falls—as we have been told is also likely to happen in relation to red routes. New bypasses constructed around our towns and villages not only promote road safety but improve the environment: the air breathed by those living and shopping in the town or village in question becomes less polluted as a larger proportion of the fast through traffic is taken out of its centre.

My hon. Friend the Minister compared our road casualty figures with those for other countries. He said that, in the United Kingdom, there were 10 road deaths per 100,000 of the population. I believe that the figure may

be even better than that. Some 18 months ago, in November 1990, his predecessor the former Member for Southampton, Itchen—whom we greatly miss and who we hope will return here before long—said in our road safety debate that the figure was 9·2 per 100,000. That figure was for 1989 and there has been some improvment since then. I therefore wonder whether the figure is not nearer 9 per 100,000 than 10 per 100,000, which was the figure that the Minister gave today.

The Minister said that, in the United States, the figure was 18 per 100,000; in Germany, 13; and in France, 20. In 1990, the former Minister referred to some other countries where the figures were higher still, such as Spain, with 21 per 100,000, Luxembourg, with 23 per 100,000 and Portugal with 33 per 100,000. Although we have nothing to be complacent about—and the Minister was certainly not complacent, but expressed his determination that the figures should be reduced still further—several other countries in the European Community have a substantially worse record than ours. However, our figures remain too high, at 4,520 deaths per year, or 90 per week, or 13 per day; and, like any sudden and violent death, every single death on the roads is a great personal tragedy.

Other forms of transport are safer than road transport. The casualty figures per mile travelled are much lower for rail, air and water transport than for road transport. When there is an air, train or boat accident—one thinks of the Clapham rail accident, the Lockerbie air crash and the sinking of the Marchioness in the Thames—a large number of people are killed all at once. The media will inevitably focus on such disasters because of their immensity, with the numbers killed reaching double or even treble figures. The Minister said that 96 per cent. of all transport accidents in Britain took place on the roads and the 13 deaths per day on the roads far exceed the figures for air, water and rail transport.

Earlier this year, there was an appalling tragedy affecting my constituency in which five young people aged between 17 and 20 travelling in the same car were killed on the M25 to the south of London. Three of them were from Teddington, one from Twickenham and one from outside my constituency who I believe lived in Chiswick. The inquest took place on Tuesday and I have read the first reports of it published in the local newspapers this morning. I should like to send those reports to the Minister and would ask him to be kind enough to examine them, to send for a full statement of the coroner's remarks at the inquest and to ask his officials to analyse them and establish what lessons can be learned and whether safety on the M25 and other motorways can be improved, in the hope that, in the long run, some good may come out of that appalling tragedy.

I was glad to hear the Minister say that the number of serious injuries had fallen by 30 per cent. over the past two years; that is a substantial improvement. He said that nine out of 10 casualties involve a component of human error. At first sight, that might seem inconsistent with his later statement that the prime causes of accidents were speed and drink, but a further analysis will show that there is no inconsistency, because it is, of course, possible for human error to occur at speed or when a person is drink-driving. I believe, however, that a large proportion of accidents are due to human carelessness or error or lack of common sense.

The Minister referred to speed. It is an established fact that speed is a cause of accidents: there is no doubt about it. However, I must enter a caveat. Speed limits must make sense to ordinary motorists. It is no use imposing a 40 mph speed limit on a dual carriageway where the general motoring public think that to travel at 50 or 60 mph is perfectly safe. If the local authority, or the Department of Transport in respect of trunk roads, does that, the speed limit is unlikely to be respected. Drivers will take relatively little notice of it and will think that it is safe to drive much faster. On dual carriageways where there is a large amount of traffice, the police are likely to have enforcement problems, in terms of the manpower that they can spare to enforce speed limits. Respect for law and order is likely, therefore, to be undermined.

Speed limits must be credible and consistent. I hope that my hon. Friend will ensure that his Department uses its influence to ensure reasonable consistency as between one local authority and another in the application of speed limits. Reasonable common sense must be used to bring about consistent standards or speed limits will not be respected by the public and the dangers on the road will be increased rather than diminished.

Lorries often drive too fast on motorways, as do coaches. The drivers of cars and lorries on motorways sometimes drive far too close behind the vehicle in front for safety. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] My hon. Friends endorse what I say. That feeling is, I believe, shared by the whole House and, I hope, by those who sit on the Treasury Bench. It is dangerous when so many cars on motorways are driven 20, 15 or even 10 yards behind the car in front, even at a fairly high speed. If the attention of the driver of the car in front is momentarily distracted, or if the driver of the car in front sees impending congestion that cannot be seen by the driver of the car behind him or if, through carelessness, the first car begins to run out of petrol and slows down, that could be very dangerous if the following car is travelling at high speed only 10 or 20 yards behind. I hope that the Government will look at what can be done. It is easy for me to stand here and pose the problem. It is much more difficult to provide a solution. I hope that I shall be assured that this point is under careful consideration.

Another problem is that a car can be driven in the slow lane at about 50 or 60 mph while the driver of the car or lorry behind is breathing down the neck of that driver, almost terrorising him into increasing his speed, which he may reasonably not wish to do, or forcing him onto the hard shoulder. That can terrify women drivers in particular. It is extraordinary that people who are not at all worried about wasting between 30 and 60 seconds in a town, through congestion, become highly indignant if somebody in front of them on a motorway causes a delay of between 5 and 10 seconds, which might be the difference between travelling for a minute at 70 mph or travelling for a minute at 60 mph. We must try to improve driving standards on our motorways.

As for the seat belt legislation, front seat legislation was passed in 1981 and enforced in 1983. Rear seat belt legislation has been passed in more recent years. As that legislation was passed more recently, the House has focused its attention this morning on rear seat belts. May I point out, however, that front seat belts, which were made compulsory in 1983, were the subject of many contentious private Members' Bills in the 1970s. There were fierce disagreements in all parts of the House, the argument being between individual liberty and safety. That legislation has saved about 200 lives a year and 7,000

[Mr. Toby Jessel]

serious injuries a year. I hope that the House will not mind if I mention that when the amendment was passed on 28 July 1981 the then Secretary of State for Transport, my right hon. Friend the Member for Sutton Coldfield (Sir N. Fowler) paid particular tribute, in column 1070, to my hon. Friend the Member for Faversham (Mr. Moate), to me, and to the then Member for Parliament for Norwich, North, who is now Lord Ennals, for the part that we had played over the years in bringing about the legislation.

The wearing rate of rear seat belts has regional variations, as does the wearing rate of front seat belts. I hope that the Minister will examine figures produced by the AA, that I shall send to him on Monday, which show that the wearing rate is 97 per cent. in the midlands, 69 per cent. in Scotland, 90 per cent. in the south-east and 91 per cent. in the west country and in Wales. In view of this significant variation, it would be interesting to look at the causes and see what lessons can be drawn to improve still further the wearing rates in those parts of the country where, on average, it is lower.

My hon. Friend referred to the advertisements for cars on television and said, "Gone are the days when safety does not pay." That is certainly a great change. Only three or four years ago when new cars were advertised on television, the advertisements related only to speed and performance, not at all to safety. The public want safer cars, but still more could be done by the car and advertising industries to reflect that change in public taste. I hope that the Government will do more to encourage the car and advertising industries to move still further in that direction.

The hon. Member for Deptford referred to the red routes and kindly allowed me to intervene on that subject. Although it is the responsibility of the Minister who deals with transport in London, I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister for Roads and Traffic will pass on to him my request that the red routes should be evaluated as soon as possible in safety terms. Even if it is only a pilot evaluation, I believe that statistically significant figures could be produced at this stage. There is so much controversy about red routes that we should be aware of the effects upon safety, which should be a major factor when we decide how fast we want the red route scheme to proceed.

My hon. Friend the Minister referred to child safety, but made little reference to school crossing patrols. There are not enough of them and their standard is very variable.

Mr. Skinner: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You will know that this morning I said that I expected a statement to be made on the bankruptcy proceedings of Olympia and York and on the Government's involvement in using taxpayers' money to build Canary Wharf. I was amazed to find that the Government will not make a statement, especially when I read in *The Independent* that, despite the bankruptcy proceedings under chapter 11, the Government are continuing negotiations with Olympia and York. This has all the hallmarks of the same business as Maxwell. Having raised the matter four times this week, I received a letter yesterday from Olympia and York telling me to shut my mouth about the matter and about the scandalous waste of taxpayers' money. At the time as it was sending me that letter yesterday, it was in the process of filing bankruptcy proceedings. I will not be gagged, and I demand that the Government make a statement.

Several Hon. Members *rose——*

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. Madam Speaker dealt with this subject this morning and informed the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) that, as far as she was aware, no request had been made for a Minister to make a statement. That is the situation as I understand it at this moment in time. I have no doubt that the Minister has taken note of what the hon. Member said, and I do not see any useful purpose in having any further points of order on this subject.

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The canary died at Canary Wharf in the small hours of the morning. It was unusual because it took place on the other side of the Atlantic in Toronto and New York, which are six or seven hours behind us. As a result, first thing this morning, Ministers may not have paid attention to what had happened and may not have received advice from the appropriate Department. It appears that some form of bail-out procedure will go ahead because of the £400 million that was due to be spent by the company on the Jubilee line, and because of the question of the 3,000 civil servants that the Government are thinking of moving——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. We seem to be going over the same ground. I do not see any useful purpose in continuing points of order if they are on this subject. I repeat that I am not aware of any requests being made for a Minister to make a statement. I have said that the Minister will have taken note of what has been said. In the circumstances, we should get on with the debate.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: On a different subject?

Mr. Spearing: It is a procedural point of order. I shall not mention the issue because I am an east London Member. You have given the position as it stands. If the Government intend to make a statement on this important matter at 2.30 pm or 3 pm, will you tell the House how such an intimation might be relayed to us, either in the Chamber or by a notice in the Lobby?

Mr. Ken Livingstone (Brent, East): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. May I say to the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) that that could be done, if necessary, but it is a matter for the Government.

Mr. John Prescott (Kingston upon Hull, East): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We appreciate your difficulties and I certainly do not want to add to them, but there are special circumstances surrounding the request for a statement of 2.30 pm.

Although this matter covers a number of Departments, the Department of Transport is particularly affected because of the Jubilee line investment. Some concern has been expressed that, as the company defaulted on the £40 million payment that was due on 31 March, a deal may be done over the weekend. As a transport Minister is here, the

Department could make a statement by 2.30 pm, with particular reference to the Jubilee line. The House at least would then have some understanding of what is likely to happen over the weekend. Failing that, we shall have transport questions and a transport debate on Monday, which would allow a statement to be made. Much concern has been expressed about this, so I hope that the Department will consider making a statement at the end of the debate at 2.30 pm

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I have said that that is possible, and no doubt the Minister will have taken note.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is it on the same subject?

Mr. Hughes: The same subject.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I am not taking any more points on the subject. I have covered the point.

Mr. Jessel: I was referring to school crossing patrols and the need to maintain the training of patrol keepers. I should like the Department of Transport to refer to the Metropolitan police a request for a school crossing patrol at Stanley Road school, Teddington.

More generally, in relation to the safety of primary and comprehensive schoolchildren on their way to and from school, visibility bags—school satchels and bags in dayglo colours—are produced by a company in my constituency called Day Star. My hon. Friend the Member for Basildon (Mr. Amess) and I share the belief about the need to introduce such safety measures to protect schoolchildren travelling to and from school. I shall send the information to my hon. Friend the Minister and ask him to look into it.

I refer next to the creeping increase in the tendency of cyclists to ride their bicycles across pedestrian crossings. That is a very unsafe practice because most motorists do not know whether they have to give way. All motorists know that they have to give way to pedestrians on pedestrian crossings, but are hazy about whether they have to give way to cyclists. That uncertainty will cause accidents if it is not dealt with and I should like the Minister to hold discussions with the police and local authority representatives to see what can be done to police and to reduce such behaviour on pedestrian crossings.

One cause of road accidents that I have not heard referred to in the House or anywhere else is that sometimes foliage from plants, trees or bushes grows over road signs. Will the Minister see what can be done to monitor regularly the growth of foliage across road signs? When drivers look at road signs, often at speed, they want to absorb the information in a split second. If they cannot see because a sign is overgrown it might take some seconds to see what it says. That can distract their attention from the roads which might be unsafe. I should like action to be taken to ensure that this does not happen.

The Automobile Association has drawn to my attention the need to analyse the role of young drivers in causing road accidents. The hon. Member for Deptford also referred to young drivers. The subject should be added to the Minister's intentions to consider child safety and drink-drivers—young drivers should be added to his list as a third category.

Young drivers have a worse accident record than middle-aged or older drivers. When the Automobile Association contacted me about that a few days ago, I asked it to send me a note from which I should like to read. It states:

"About 17 per cent. of driving licence holders are under the age of 25. However, 27 per cent. of accidents involve a driver from this age group. The common perception of an accident involving a young driver is of a high speed accident in which the young driver is hurt. In fact, young drivers are involved in nearly 90,000 accidents"—

presumably per year—

"in which someone is hurt, yet only 38,000 young drivers are themselves casualties. This suggests that well over 50,000 other people are killed or injured each year in accidents involving young drivers.

The magnitude of this problem is such that the AA Foundation for Road Safety Research commissioned Southampton University to research young drivers.

The main findings of this research were:

—That only a minority of young drivers—about one third of the total—can be classified as unsafe"

and that young drivers use their cars differently from more experienced drivers. It goes on to suggest some measures. It states that

"the AA is calling for the introduction of a system which phases in the 12 penalty points that drivers may accrue before being disqualified:

—First year drivers would be required to re-take their driving test once four points had been endorsed on their licences . . . Second year drivers would be treated similarly once six points had been endorsed. Third year drivers would be re-tested after ten points had been endorsed on their licences."

I should like the Minister to consider those issues and those raised by other hon. Members. I thank him and the House for their patience.

11.1 am

Mr. Tom Cox (Tooting): May I begin by congratulating you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on your appointment? During your time as a Member of this House, you have established a record of knowledge of the subjects on which you have spoken, but, above all, you are known for the great courtesy that you have always shown to colleagues, irrespective of the party to which they belong. I am sure that that will continue in your new role and that you are aware of the great pleasure that your appointment has given to the House. May I also congratulate the Minister for Roads and Traffic on his appointment? Transport in general and the matters for which he will be responsible are clearly in the forefront of the lives of all the people whom we represent, and I wish him well in his appointment.

Like other hon. Members who have spoken, I welcome this debate. The recent general election in which we were all involved covered many issues, but, although transport and the environment were often discussed, road safety did not receive much publicity. Certainly, at the meetings that I attended, it did not arise at all, but it is closely related to transport and environmental issues.

I am sure that hon. Members who have been here for a while and those who have only recently arrived are or will soon become aware that our weekly postbags contain a sizeable number of letters from constituents expressing enormous concern about the volume of traffic through the areas that we represent, about the rat runs that motorists unfortunately develop in residential areas, about the size of lorries that often drive through those areas, and, above all, about the parking problems. The list goes on and on.

I am often told—I share this view—that the movement of traffic is given priority over the safety of pedestrians and

[Mr. Tom Cox]

the protection of the local community. I am sure that, when we deal with the respective authorities—be they the local council or the police—we are told that of course there is concern for residents, but when those residents or local residents' groups suggest ideas, they are told, "We're sorry but that would not be possible," or, "That would be far too expensive." I hope that when the Minister outlines his Department's plans for greater road safety, we shall learn that the policies to be introduced and followed will relate to the views of local people, to their safety and to the protection of their environment.

Conservative and Labour hon. Members have spoken about red routes. They are to be introduced in my constituency in south London. Lots of claims are made about them, but in the area where they have already been introduced—in the Islington and Highgate area—one does not hear the local people saying how marvellous they are and that they want a lot more. Nor has there been any proof that they have increased the safety of the people who live in that area, but, as my hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms. Ruddock) said, we understand that the Department of Transport intends to introduce many more such routes.

What does the Pedestrians Association say about red routes? It issued a press release on 20 March this year—so it is very recent—entitled "Red route blueprint is a disaster." That organisation is wholly committed to the issues that we are discussing—road safety and safety in general for people who use the roads, whether they are drivers of motor vehicles or pedestrians. I know that the debate is not about red routes as such, but they are related to the issues that we are discussing.

We cannot say that we are dealing with the movement of traffic alone or with the general safety of pedestrians. We also have a duty to make known the views of shopkeepers in the areas in question. Many of them have developed their businesses through enormous hard work over many years. They are not the big chains such as Tesco, Sainsbury or Marks and Spencer, but people who have worked very hard to build up their businesses. They are wholly opposed to red routes. Clearly, they are opposed to them because they see the effect that they have or could have on their business, but they are also expressing to me their concern about what will happen in the areas where the red routes are to be introduced.

Many people go to their shopping in their cars. Where will they park their cars? They will park them in residential areas—if they can find a parking space—thus adding to the problems of local pedestrians. I know that this issue may not be the sole responsibility of the Minister for Roads and Traffic, but it is certainly the responsibility of his Department.

I shall quote some comments made by the Islington Society, a local environmental society which represents the area in which the red routes operate. In a recent publication, from January this year, it says:

"We originally welcomed the bus-priority aspect of the red route. But the pilot scheme has led to no extra buses. Instead we have seen an 11 per cent. increase in all other traffic—most of it cars of commuters, simply adding to London's overall congestion. . . . Red routes which encourage more traffic into our already congested capital must be vigorously opposed for the sake of London's economy and its environment."

I am sure that the Minister will have the courtesy to make known not only my views on red routes but those of other hon. Members before any future development of that scheme. I beg him to listen not only to the views of the officials in his Department, the conscientious and talented council officers and local shopkeepers, but, above all, to the community in areas where red routes are to be introduced.

It has been said this morning that the Department of Transport forecasts a doubling in car ownership in the next 25 years. We must begin to ask exactly what that means in terms of road safety. Where will those vehicles be driven? Members of Parliament, wherever their constituencies, spend much time in London and know about the enormous congestion here. Congestion exists not only in London and other big cities. Indeed, the Minister's city must suffer from time to time from considerable traffic congestion. We are told that there will be a year-by-year increase in traffic. Where will those vehicles be driven and parked on existing roads?

In parts of London, the double parking at night of vehicles with no lights on them has become a real problem. It presents enormous problems, yet when the police take it up, they say that they know that the drivers are breaking the law, but there is nowhere else for them to park their vehicles. Sadly, not enough attention is paid to that potential safety hazard, which is increasingly creeping into London. I hope that, if the Minister cannot answer that point in detail today, he will see what his officials have to say and perhaps write to me and let me know what can be done to curb double parking.

During the recent general election campaign, all hon. Members, irrespective of their political party, heard public transport raised time and again at public meetings. I have listened to one or two of the maiden speeches in the House in the past few days and it was interesting to hear Members, irrespective of their political party, say that their constituencies needed an improvement in public transport services. How right they are. There can be no hon. Member who says that his constituents do not want an improvement, be it in buses, London underground or whatever form of transport. There is a continuing cry for better public transport services.

What is the Government's policy to be on that? Report after report shows what is needed. I represent a south London constituency and I come to the House on public transport—and travel on the Northern line, which goes through much of my constituency. It is a sheer and utter disgrace to the people who must use it every day to go to work. The stations and trains are in poor condition and overcrowded. Despite repeated attempts in the House to achieve improvements—not only on the Northern line, which also goes through many hon. Members' constituencies—little progress has been made.

No great progress is being made on the buses either. There may be an increase in the number of buses, but closely related to safety measures is the problem of bus lanes. I fully support bus lanes, but we have to go only a couple of hundred yards from the House to see that they exist in certain areas and then disappear totally. Then, some half a mile further along the road, they reappear. There seems to be no overall policy on the introduction of bus lanes. Obviously, the Department of Transport, the police and the local authority are all involved in decision making, but there must be a policy on bus lanes if bus traffic in London is to be speeded up.

On public transport generally, we are only too aware of what we do not have: comfort and reliability. Against

those weaknesses, we experience the ever-increasing cost of travelling on London transport. I belong to the Council of Europe and, like other hon. Members who belong to that organisation, often go to meetings in Europe. This week, I was in Paris for a meeting. I can travel on the whole of the Paris network for the equivalent of 30p for a single fare. To go from this House to Victoria, a single fare costs 80p. That is just one of the weaknesses of our transport system. It is too costly, in view of the poor service and poor reliability.

Mr. Jessel: On subsidising the underground system, is not one significant difference between London and Paris the fact that Paris has a full underground network, so that, at least within the city boundary—the peripherique—nowhere is more than 500 m from a Metro station? Everyone can fairly use the system and benefit from the subsidy.

In London, the underground network is fairly full north of the Thames, but on the south side there are only a few underground lines, one of which goes through the hon. Gentleman's constituency. The main public transport network in south London, as the hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms. Ruddock) will know, is British Rail's Network SouthEast. Therefore, a form of public subsidy that enables people to travel practically free on the underground is not fair to taxpayers in areas of London that cannot make equal use of it.

Mr. Cox: I note the hon. Gentleman's comments, but I never hear such comments in Europe. I gave Paris as an example. The hon. Gentleman is also a member of the Council of Europe and often uses public transport in France. The main difference between the attitude of people and Governments in Europe, irrespective of their political persuasion, and the attitude of this Government is that the Europeans have a greater commitment to an efficient public transport system. If it means sizeable sums of public money being put in, that is done. The hon. Member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel) and other hon. Members know that services in Europe are far better than they are here.

The deregulation of buses, which has not been mentioned so far, is related to road safety and public safety. We are told that there will be legislation in this Parliament for the deregulation of buses, not only in London but throughout the United Kingdom. Those who respresent constituencies in Greater London—not only those who, like me, represent inner London constituencies—will appreciate that one of the great achievements of recent years is the travel pass. Whether Labour, Conservative or Liberal Democrat Members, we know that the travel pass has made the buses one of the most popular forms of travel for elderly people.

I hope that we shall be given an early assurance that, if bus services are deregulated, the travel pass which people now enjoy will be wholly protected. If it is not, if people are asked to pay large sums or if some of the people who take over the deregulated bus services say that they are no longer prepared to follow the old system of travel passes, people may feel that they cannot afford to travel by bus and that they have to walk. That is a crucial point, although I will not pursue it now, because I am sure that we shall frequently return to it.

I understand that a transport working group is to be set up in the Department of Transport, and I hope that the Minister will tell us a little bit about it. Who will be invited to serve on that group? The feedback I have had—I am trying to be fair and I realise that the final decisions may not have been made—is that the group will comprise representatives of public transport and representatives of the private organisations that may, in the deregulation of the bus services, become increasingly involved in the running of London transport.

I mentioned the Pedestrians Association. Will it be invited to become a member of the group? Other hon. Members have mentioned cyclists. There is an active cyclists group in the House. Will it have a member on the transport working group? To deal with the overall problems, we must broaden the group to include organisations with a contribution to make.

Safety policy must be planned. One of the great weaknesses for London—London as the capital city is different from many of our large and important cities—is that we lack a strategic body for the 32 boroughs that make up Greater London. I hope that we shall hear about the Government's thoughts on setting up such a body, which could plan transport policy generally throughout London, including road policy, pedestrian policy and everything else that plays a part in road safety.

In our constituencies are men and women who belong to various local community groups. They give a great deal of time and are very committed to looking after the areas in which they live. They want to protect the environment, they try to deal with the problems of the rat runs for motorists through residential areas, and they work with local councils.

Two adjoining boroughs are often unaware of each other's road proposals. It is time that there was a strategic planning body for Greater London. Let us not be shunted along the line of people saying, "Oh, it will be another Greater London council reincarnation." We are not talking about that. We are talking about the urgent need for a body that knows London and which is made up of the people and officers of local authorities. Such a body would be able to plan developments, especially in transport, and could consider the interrelated issues of transport. We in London urgently need such a body.

This has been an extremely useful debate. This is not a subject on which everything has to be political. We can all say that certain things could be done better, but the tenor of the debate so far has revealed the commitment of all hon. Members, irrespective of party, to road safety because of its importance to our constituents.

11.35 am

Lady Olga Maitland (Sutton and Cheam): I listened with great interest to the speech by the hon. Member for Tooting (Mr. Cox). He calls for a strategic planning body for London. He gave his own answer when he said that people would say that it was just another monolithic Greater London council. I could not agree with him more. I put it on the record that local boroughs know best how to run their planning.

I will focus on my hon. Friend the Minister's comments about child safety, and the child death and accident rate. I welcome keenly the Government's child safety campaign. It is effective and I hope that the Government will keep up the impetus in that area. I especially welcome the fact that child pedestrian deaths are now down by 11 per cent., although there are still far too many deaths. There is much work to be done in dealing with the problem of children

[Lady Olga Maitland]

between eight and 12 years old. Only the other day in my constituency I almost died a death myself watching two youngsters dive through fast-moving traffic. Clearly no one was there to stop them. There is great concern about 10 to 14-year-old boys who weave around the district on their bicycles. Every child is a son or daughter and each of those young lives is enormously important.

It is important to keep up the pressure on road safety education. I register my concern about Liberal Democrat-controlled Sutton council. It used to fund a road safety officer who supervised the campaign in the district. Last year the council cut that important service on the ground of cost and it has no plans to readvertise the post. That is a serious loss.

It is all very well for the council to say that it had to make the cut on the ground of cost, yet it spends a lot of money in providing skips. Skips on the roadside are an obstacle to people especially if one is blind and comes across a skip that one has not anticipated. It is important for us to pay attention to education locally on road safety. Although I pay tribute to the fact that the council send out three district officers to the schools, I believe that it is only a start and is not enough.

I turn to the quite interesting comments by the hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms. Ruddock) on education in schools on road safety. She mentioned that 85 per cent. of pupils in secondary schools and two thirds of pupils in primary schools do not receive proper road safety education. I am sure that a far higher number are receiving road safety education and that is certainly the case in Sutton. Perhaps my hon. Friend the Minister could give us a clear picture of the Government's position.

Road safety education is not part of the core curriculum, but it is taught in many schools. I wonder whether the hon. Member for Deptford has a blind spot about the core curriculum, because it strikes me that the Labour party is doing a U-turn on it. Perhaps the hon. Lady will tell us where, finally, the Labour party stands on that important issue.

The road safety officer of Sutton should be reappointed and more support should be given to the Sutton road safety council, a voluntary body. Until recently, it received helpful funding for an education programme that it held on Saturday mornings in a drill hall. Eight to 12-year-olds were given a good visual display that included a talking Belisha, which advised them on how to cross the road properly, a fully dressed Guardsman who talked to them about road safety and, as a salutary lesson, an introduction to a nurse from our local hospital, St. Helier, who warned, "You don't want to end up in the hospital, do you?" Such voluntary bodies are important and deserve support, but funding has been cut by the local council for rather selfish reasons.

We should remind ourselves about the high rate of child accidents again and again—I know that my hon. Friend the Minister is aware of that problem. Research conducted at Newcastle university showed that one child in 10 admitted to hospital is there as a result of an accident—nine times out of 10 the child was injured, and at fault, because he ran across a road. My goodness, that could easily have happened to the two boys that I saw just the other day.

My local council should re-examine its priorities. Recently it cancelled a one-way experimental scheme, which would have cost £23,000, but it still funds the local theatre to the tune of £500,000 a year—that theatre is always empty. The council is not attaching priority to the matters that count most and which save lives.

The Sutton road safety council also deserves support because it has tried to educate the elderly on how to cross the road. Often the elderly become disoriented and they have difficulty in judging their distance from and the speed of cars. The council put elderly people into a simulator which helped them to reassess how to cross the road.

One contentious road-calming method used in Sutton is the road hump; mention of such humps causes many complaints and groans. I accept that when road humps were first introduced, they were extremely popular and many local authorities adopted them. However, sometimes local authorities get a bit obsessed with one road-calming method. The traffic advisory leaflet issued by Sutton council makes exhausting reading, because it talks about humps being used for between 20 or 150 yd of a road or for half a mile. I accept that such road humps slow traffic down, which is good, but, because of that, the emergency services cannot get to their destinations quick enough. I am told by the ambulance service that they cause great difficulties when one is trying to get a patient with a spinal injury to hospital safely. One of my constituents has cancer of the bladder and it is no joke to drive down one's local road if one has to go over bumps all the time. We must try to adopt a more flexible approach and we must consider other means of traffic calming.

Road humps are unpopular and often the traffic that would normally travel down such roads dives off down another street, without humps, so creating other rat runs and other bottlenecks. That happened in Sutton when one long street, Mulgrave road, had humps put down. Therefore, the traffic problem is pushed from A to B. We must try to ensure that road humps are used across the district rather than in just particular areas. What is more, road humps do not deter the madcap driver, the young guys who drive souped-up cars see it as a challenge to get over the humps as quickly as possible. Even law-abiding drivers, who slow down to drive over the hump, rev up their cars to do so, thus creating even more noise.

We should encourage local authorities to make more use of chicanes or rumble strips—which I prefer—one-way systems, which are helpful to emergency services, which then know exactly where they are going, and roundabouts.

I am not very keen on road-narrowing schemes. Worcester Park high street in my constituency has been deliberately narrowed to two lanes and as a result we have traffic jams of half a mile. Road narrowing may slow traffic, but it often creates traffic jams, from which no one benefits. I should like more cul-de-sacs to be introduced, as they create a better environment for residents. Some people may argue that they create rat runs, but they are definable. One can also introduce 20 mph speed limits in such streets.

Speed limits are becoming a viable method of controlling traffic. I was interested to hear about the use of detector cameras and their deterrent effect. In the past, people have argued that speed limits do not work because it is difficult to detect those who break that limit. It is also said that people always drive between 5 and 10 mph faster than the designated speed limit. However, with the use of detector cameras, speed limits can be enforced. I hope that

the Government will increase the number of such pilot schemes, because detector cameras would work in residential areas.

I stayed in a provincial American town with a 20 mph speed limit and I admit that I felt that I was living life as though in a slow-motion film. However, everyone drove at 20 mph because they knew that they were being monitored. It was a fact of life and we still got to our destinations okay. We should get to our destinations as a result of a smooth ride, not a stop-start one. I hope that the impetus for introducing 20 mph schemes will be kept up.

Reductions in speed have a significant effect on the accident rate. It was salutary to learn from recent Department of Transport figures that a child has an 83 per cent. chance of dying if it is struck by a vehicle travelling at 45 mph, but that only 37 per cent. of children are killed or hurt if they are hit by a car travelling at 30 mph and, most interesting, only 5 per cent. of children are hurt if they are hit by a car travelling at 20 mph. Surely saving those lives is worth the pain and agony of travelling at slower speeds. I hope that the Government will keep up their work.

People who are given a driving penalty point on their licence often see it as a painless punishment. Let us suppose that those guilty of serious speeding offences were guilty of a crime. I accept that heavier penalties have been introduced, and I welcome that, but I believe that if such speeding were made a criminal offence that would act as a deterrent. I accept that some people may be shocked at that idea, but it should be considered. I welcomed what my hon. Friend the Minister said about measures designed to deal with drink-driving and alcoholics. The campaign to educate social drinkers is now beginning to have an effect on us all and I am sure that the Perrier company has had increased sales as a result—to good effect.

We must not give up in that area, but we must take a harder look at what to do about alcoholics. For example, should doctors report alcoholic patients? That would be a breach of confidence, but we should examine the possibility. The evidence shows that the education campaign about the social drinking habits of adults is beginning to work. I hope that the Government will continue their determined efforts to tackle the alcoholic driver. There is no doubt that a car with a drunk behind the wheel is a lethal weapon.

11.50 am

Mr. Nigel Jones (Cheltenham): I am grateful for the opportunity to make my maiden speech in this important debate. I congratulate you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and the Minister on your appointments.

It is with some trepidation that I follow in the footsteps of a Member who over many years had a great impact on the well-being and perhaps even the performance of hon. Members. Sir Charles Irving, who retired at the election, was famous inside and outside the House as Chairman of the Commons Catering Committee. Cheltenham has been in no doubt about the importance of the post and many people in the town believe that it carried with it a seat in the Cabinet. This place has the reputation of being the home of humbugs, but it was Sir Charles who decided to package them and make a profit from them. The personal contribution by Sir Charles to Cheltenham is second to none. He was first elected to the council in 1948, the year in which I was born, became mayor for the first time in 1958 and MP for the constituency in 1974. He always put Cheltenham first in a manner that I shall endeavour to follow. I am following in his footsteps in more ways than one because when Sir Charles was first elected to this place he was the county councillor for Park ward in Cheltenham, a seat which I now hold, albeit with a majority of only four.

Sir Charles Irving came to the House after many years in industry and business. For the past 20 years I, too, have followed a career in industry at home and abroad and I share Sir Charles Irving's concern for the future of Britain's manufacturing industry. Sir Charles fought long and hard for the dispossessed and the victims in society, and that often brought him into conflict with his party. It is right to stress his personal qualities because it was his undoubted local strength and appeal which held off the Liberal and Alliance challenge at previous elections. That challenge was led by Richard Holme, now Lord Holme of Cheltenham. I pay tribute to his efforts and thank him for his help and advice.

National victory on 9 April followed the local victory of the Liberal Democrats winning control of Cheltenham borough council in 1991. The values that matter to Cheltenham—personal liberty, quality of education and the local environment—are at the heart of Liberal Democrat philosophy. It is important to stress Liberal achievements in Cheltenham, because the people there are distressed and annoyed about the way in which they have recently been portrayed. Cheltenham is a civilised and tolerant place and the abhorrent antics of a few, aided and abetted by sections of the media, must not be allowed to obscure that fact. Whatever may have appeared in the press, Cheltenham cast a positive vote in favour of the Liberal Democrats and for a representative who will continue to put Cheltenham before party or office.

Cheltenham has been famous and in the news in recent years as the home of GCHQ. During a debate on GCHQ Sir Charles Irving refused to give way to a lady Member with the words:

"Not if you were the only girl in the world and I were the only boy."

The banning of trade unions at GCHQ, which Sir Charles vigorously opposed, was the epitome of Thatcherism. Now we have Majorism with its citizens charter and more Government openness. If that new spirit is to mean anything, trade union rights at GCHQ must be restored.

Education is important to Cheltenham which has high-quality local schools and world-renowned independent schools. We may soon have a university, but our education service is under threat as a result of yesterday's capping of Gloucestershire's budget. That will result in cuts in education, larger classes, less equipment, fewer books and redundant teachers. Capping will also impede our chief constable's efforts to fight crime.

There is growing opposition to capping, even among those who originally saw it as an essential weapon against unrepresentative and irresponsible councils. The case for capping Cheltenham is even weaker and the decision smacks of political spite. Boundary changes, which have increased Cheltenham's population, and the demand for services have not been fully taken into account by the Department of the Environment. I shall return to that issue, but in the meantime I hope that Ministers will listen to reason and the facts and will withdraw their decision to penalise the voters of Cheltenham and Gloucestershire.

[Mr. Nigel Jones]

Road safety is also of prime importance to Cheltenham. I shall draw to the attention of the House several cases to show that further action is needed. The A40 trunk road runs directly through Cheltenham. There has been talk of a bypass since 1954, but the time for talk is over. The plans to detrunk the A40 must be brought forward and implemented as soon as possible. Some black spots must be made safe and in that context the first priority is Bouncer's lane, where a cyclist was recently killed. Many parents of children at St. Mary's school fear another tragedy. Other roads about which I shall continue to campaign for rapid improvement include London road, on which a new crossing is needed, Village road and Springbank road where traffic-calming measures are needed. Leckhampton road and Prestbury road have bad accident records and there is a dangerous junction at Hales road, Hewlett road, Priors road and Harp hill.

At the heart of all those safety problems is the desire of the local community to achieve or to better the Government's target of a reduction of one third in accidents by the year 2000. As a member of Cheltenham's road safety committee, I know that additional resources are the key and that they must be directed to the specific areas of enforcement, education, engineering and encouragement. Speed limits and parking regulations must be enforced and that will require additional police. We must educate drivers, cyclists and pedestrians and that requires extra staff and material. We must undertake required engineering work and that requires proper funding of road improvements so that problems, such as the need for a pedestrian crossing in Tewkesbury road, are identified and dealt with before and not after the tragic death of an eight-year-old.

We must prevent accidents by campaigning for a change in attitude and encourage more careful driving. We must ensure that vehicles are properly maintained and we must stop people drinking and driving. I support the call by the hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms. Ruddock) for random breath tests. We can make roads safer even with the present volume of traffic, but we should also try to reduce that volume to make our roads safer still. That requires investment in public transport. In the years ahead, I hope that the Government will allow local authorities the funding that they need to carry out basic protection measures as part of a national road safety programme.

Cheltenham is a beautiful town and a wonderful place in which to live and work. It can be a safer place, but that requires a partnership between the Government, the local authority and the community. The local council and the community are ready and willing to play their part. I ask the Government to match that commitment.

Mr. Livingstone: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. In the last few minutes, the High Court has ruled that the Secretary of State for Education is guilty of manifest unfairness in his decision to deny state funding for Islamic schools in my constituency. This is the first time in this Parliament that the Government have been defeated in the courts and on an issue for which there will be much cross-party support. We should have an urgent statement, before the House rises, on what the Secretary of State intends to do so as to comply immediately with the judgment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: This is a matter for the Government, not for me. I am sure that the Minister will have noted the points that the hon. Gentleman has made.

12 noon

Mr. Ian Taylor (Esher): I congratulate the hon. Member for Cheltenham (Mr. Jones), and welcome him to the House. Making a maiden speech is always an exciting occasion. In the months to come, he may speak in a debate that is better attended than this, but he will never forget his first speech. I hope that this contributions have as much beneficial impact on the proceedings of the Chamber as his predecessor's did on our digestions. Sir Charles was a great character, who is much missed. News of his retirement was greeted with great sadness because he had an influence on our proceedings in many ways and made major contributions to them. The hon. Gentleman has a great tradition in which to follow.

The House will not be surprised when I also say, with no disrespect to the hon. Gentleman, how sad I was about the publicity surrounding our excellent Conservative candidate in Cheltenham, my namesake, John Taylor. I hope that he will soon find a place in the country because were he to come here, he would quickly become an excellent Conservative Member of Parliament. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."]

This is an important debate which covers many matters of great concern to our constituents. It shows that the House of Commons can rapidly address matters of such importance when the cut and thrust of the major debates that inevitably come up in a general election campaign are cast aside and we get on with our job of looking after the detailed interests of our constituents.

The Minister gave us some encouraging figures. Although we cannot afford to be complacent, those figures at least show that road safety is being firmly tackled. Fewer people were killed on our roads last year than at any time since 1948. That is quite remarkable, when one considers the different nature of transport today. We should note with pleasure that improvement and the fact that road deaths fell by 13 per cent. in 1991 to 4,520.

However, as a Member of Parliament I am staggered at the figures that I have obtained from the Library on the average number of deaths and serious injuries per constituency. In 1990, in Great Britain, there were 5,217 fatal road accidents, and a further 60,441 people were seriously injured. There will be considerable variation from constituency to constituency, depending on population and traffic conditions, but on average these figures represent eight deaths and 96 serious injuries a year per constituency. Less serious injuries are less likely to be monitored, but those reported number about 270,000, or 480 per constituency. These are staggering figures and show how much attention we must pay to road safety.

It is right that the other causes of death should attract our attention and concern, but compared to the average per constituency, per year, of eight deaths resulting from road accidents, leukaemia is typically the cause of six deaths, suicide the cause of seven and sudden infant deaths, or cot deaths, the cause of two deaths. Therefore, road accidents are responsible for more deaths. Despite that, public attention and concern is not so sharply focused on them as it is on other causes of death, worrying

though they are. I do not wish to appear to underestimate the importance of the organisations that are trying to raise funds and focus attention on those other causes of death.

The problem is that the motor car is an important member of the family. Every family wants one and, fortunately, many families now have more than one. It is a sign of prosperity and of the fluidity of people's expectation of how they will move around. In many cases, it is people's second most important capital outlay, although many cars do not prove to be much of an investment. That is the problem for the Labour party. I could not disagree with much that the hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms. Ruddock) said. The problem is that sneaking into what the Labour party says is a slightly anti-car atmosphere. It regards the fact that car use may double over the next few years as a failing in society. Instead, it is a sign of how people want to use their resources, their leisure time and their working time. We have to adapt to that, rather than forcing people away from what they would naturally choose when given the freedom to do so.

Ms. Ruddock: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman is not surprised that he has tempted me to the Dispatch Box. He needs to realise that, while people want to own cars, in the interest of the whole of society, which means each of us individually as well, we must temper the use of those cars. If people had the option of using excellent public transport that was affordable, convenient, clean and all the things that we would like it to be, but which it so often is not, we would do what other continental European countries have done and vary our modes of transport.

What is critical is the mix. We are not criticising the ownership of cars or the desire to own them. We are criticising how much they are used and saying that we must devise a strategy for mobility that will curb the severe and adverse environmental effects of increasing car use.

Mr. Taylor: The hon. Lady extols the virtues of transport systems in continental countries, but she has already recognised that the road safety record in continental countries is worse than ours. There are not many paragons of virtue among our continental friends. However, I think that the hon. Lady will find as I continue my speech that there is much common ground between us. I am sure that we will all enjoy this spirit of post-election reconciliation.

The ideal solution would be if reality were like the television advertisement that some of us may recently have seen, in which two cars approach each other rapidly, crash head on and then, magically, separate and are perfect. Perhaps my hon. Friend the Minister should become the Minister for Vorsprung Durch Technik and introduce such wonderful developments. Sadly, life is not like that. I know to my cost as a Member of Parliament in Surrey that it is badly affected by the growth in the numbers of cars.

Car ownership in Surrey stands at 0·51 vehicles per person—I am not sure how that translates into real figures—which is 45 per cent. above the national average. With twice the average traffic flow on class A roads and the highest traffic flow on principal urban roads of all the counties, those figures cause Surrey Members of Parliament to be concerned about the directions that we should take.

I applaud the Government's target of reducing road casualties by one third by the end of the century and I am delighted that Surrey county council is making an effort to meet that target. The county has put a high priority on road safety and officials have told me that it is unique among comparable authorities in publishing a road safety plan for each district, listing key areas of high risk which require extensive research. I am delighted that it is doing so.

The district plans also facilitate the co-operation of all district authorities in the county. Let us hope that all departments of the county and district councils understand that a reduction in the number of casualties is essential.

There is no room for complacency. The numbers of deaths on the roads are unacceptably high and we will probably have to consider some unpopular measures to combat the problem. With your permission, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I may return to that subject later, but first I must highlight some of the important statistics. As the Minister said, road accidents are the main cause of death for school-age children, yet nearly two thirds of primary schools have no structured road safety programme, and that is a common concern among Members on both sides of the House.

When visiting schools in my constituency, I regularly ask whether they teach road safety, and most do so. However, it appears to be one of those subjects taught by teachers because they are concerned about it, as opposed to a subject taught in any structured way. The work of the Surrey county road safety group to introduce playgroup leaders to road safety material produced by the county is a welcome beginning to structuring awareness of road safety problems at an early age. Much of the work will be in training group leaders and schoolteachers in how to get the information across. I hope that information made available to leaders and schools will be more easily understandable.

Road user behaviour, materials and programmes are being incorporated as part of the Surrey curriculum, and that is extremely good news. If that is done throughout the county and has the co-operation of the boroughs, I believe that we will have made considerable progress.

In many cases, road safety problems involve pedestrians. That subject has already been mentioned. I admit that we may not have such a good record on pedestrian fatalities as some other countries and must therefore pay increasing attention to that problem. In urban areas, pedestrians are the largest casualty group, accounting for 60 per cent. of all fatalities. It is not hard to see why the figures that I had to go to the Library to find have already been used, but they bear repetition because they inevitably lead one to consider speed limits.

Pedestrians struck at 20 mph receive mostly minor injuries, while the majority of those struck at 30 mph are killed or seriously injured. I think that all hon. Members present in the Chamber drive, and we know that 20 mph is a frustrating speed—let us admit it. In modern cars, 30 mph is also regarded as slow, but the difference between 20 mph and 30 mph is the difference between an injury that someone can recover from and an injury from which they will not recover or which will disable them for life. As drivers, more and more of us need to realise that, and that realisation could lead to an increasing number of 20 mph zones.

We all know how difficult it is to get the police to monitor 30 mph zones. Members of Parliament can easily suggest solutions, but the question is whether they will

[Mr. Taylor]

have any impact if they cannot be enforced. The use of cameras is worth considering, but I am not yet convinced that it is a practical proposition. We certainly must find some way to encourage motorists to slow down.

One polytechnic has argued that the introduction of a 20 mph speed limit in built-up areas would initially cost up to £600 million. I have not studied its proposals in detail, but the study goes on to say that that sum could be recouped by savings of £2 billion resulting from a fall in the social costs of traffic accidents. It is difficult to get a grip on such figures, but considerable savings could undoubtedly be made if the number of people hospitalised, or having to go through rehabilitation and face other social problems, could be reduced. Therefore, we must consider in that wide context the cost of introducing some of the schemes.

The Minister rightly praised my hon. Friend the Member for Wyre (Mr. Mans) for his work on the Traffic Calming Act 1992. I know that the Act followed work by his predecessors. I welcome the initiatives that the Minister announced today and I welcome him to his position in the Ministry, because he will bring a great deal of experience to the post.

I was a sponsor of the Traffic Calming Act because I know from my constituency experience that many people want traffic to be calmed. As has already been discussed, humps are perhaps the worst solution and the most irritating form of traffic calming. They are also a disadvantage to the emergency services. Therefore, we must be careful when considering the available traffic-calming measures, but I have no doubt that that is the way in which we have to proceed if we are to achieve more sensible speed limits on our roads.

Many authorities were deterred from implementing traffic-calming measures because of worries about prosecutions for obstructing roads. That has been clarified, but local authorities do not have a vote for the funds for various new measures such as chicanes, right-angled parking, road narrowing and raised crossings. I intervened during the Minister's speech on that subject and I am worried about it. I know that my constituents want such schemes and that many people believe that they are right. However, I see no process whereby the more imaginative traffic-calming schemes, which are now permissible, can be put into practice if the funds have not been voted for them.

County and borough councillors should carefully consider their order of priorities. I am delighted to hear the Minister talking about ring-fencing certain sums of money. The Department should also consider how the availability of the new schemes can be translated into reality, without the inevitable financial restraints which will face us at local level.

During the election campaign, I was made well aware of the key areas in my constituency where traffic calming is needed. I cannot list them all, but colleagues will know only too well of similar examples in their constituencies. Claygate lane has three schools, but is used as a cut-through in the early morning, which happens to be the time when people go to work but children are also going to school. The two are incompatible, and that problem must be dealt with. Aynyard road in Cobham has quite a few young families living on it, and they face a similar problem with morning cut-through traffic. When traffic movements change or a new development takes place in part of the town, more traffic will suddenly build up on roads which previously had not been used to such traffic. West End lane in Esher is a classic example.

During examination of whether traffic-calming measures are necessary on such roads, I hope that we can get away from asking how many deaths there have been. Constituents often tell me that they know that I cannot help because they have not found any bodies that week. I understand why the Department of Transport has to consider that.

Incidentally, I warmly welcome the Minister for Transport in London to his new task. He will find that he has many friends in the House and I wish him all the best in retaining them when he carries out the onerous tasks that have been placed upon him.

The difficulty of the death criterion is that morbidity alone puts the whole otherwise interesting study of whether traffic calming can be put in place in the wrong context and starts it off on the wrong footing.

Traffic calming is important in terms of habit breaking. There is about to be a problem in Esher, where, because of road widening, traffic will detour down Milbourne lane and Littleworth road. The residents by and large accept that as inevitable. However, when the original road widening has stopped, the instinct of drivers to use the detour will remain. Some families there certainly do not wish the road to be a long-term cut-through. That is a classic case of traffic calming, even if it is not permanent traffic calming. It would break the habit of drivers using a road that was never designed to be used by morning rush hour traffic. County councils and other authorities should think not only of permanent but of temporary traffic calming to break habits.

Many other parts of my constituency will not thank me for not mentioning them this morning. I have not forgotten the residents of Ripley, Send and Clandon. Nor have I forgotten all the others. It is just that my colleagues are looking rather worried lest I mention every road in my constituency.

There is an unpopular point that we should make. Our population is aging and the aging population wish to be as mobile as when they were young. Of course that is absolutely right. Just as we are toughening tests and criteria for learner drivers, we should have tougher tests for our senior citizens. The criteria that are used by general practitioners and others should be made more explicit.

At the moment, it is up to a person to declare whether he or she has any physical or mental disability or condition that affects his or her fitness to drive. That is not just for the elderly. There are various reasons throughout life why that may be necessary. As a result of a brain tumour, from which I am glad to say she has made a good recovery, my wife has some disabilities, and she falls into the category of person who needs a medical licence that must be renewed at short notice. She had to go to Banstead to do a rehabilitation driving test. She was terrified, but passed the test well.

These test centres are not given enough attention or publicity. They not only help the individual but increase the likelihood of road safety. We tend to think of test centres only for those who will want to drive lorries or attain the advanced driver testing standard. The centres are available to all people who wish to be certain that they can still drive safely, whether because they are getting

older or have had some form of disability which requires them to be reassessed. Will my hon. Friend the Minister ensure that more publicity is given to those test centres and the desirability of increasing their number and accessibility?

Dr. Spink: Will my right hon. Friend join me in congratulating the Government bringing in on 6 April the disabled living allowance, which means that people who previously relied on mobility allowance, but from whom it was withdrawn at the age of 80, can now enjoy mobility for the whole of their lives because the allowance will not be withdrawn at 80?

Mr. Taylor: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for drawing attention to that important fact, and I certainly endorse it. *[Interruption.]* My hon. Friend the Minister for Transport in London is making a sedentary contribution from the Front Bench which should have a wider audience. If he would like to intervene on me from the Dispatch Box, he will make his debut in this debate. His typical shyness has got the better of him on this occasion.

The main point that I want to leave with the House is the importance of encouraging people to take these tests when there is any doubt about their disability. That is not only in their interests but in those of other road users.

At the beginning of my speech, I said that there were some tough choices to make, and it is on this point that I wish to end. I do not see any alternative to making the marginal use of the motor car less attractive. If one owns a motor car that is sitting in one's front drive and one wants to nip into town, there is no apparent cost, except for petrol. Nevertheless, the costs are there; one merely does not calculate them. The use of the car for marginal travel is increasing constantly.

I am not against people using cars. I am not even trying to discourage them from using cars for these journeys. That is more the attitude of the Labour party. Nevertheless, I want to draw attention to the marginal cost of using one's motor car not to one personally but to society as a whole. The House will not be surprised, therefore, to hear that I think that road pricing is inevitable. As I said in the previous Parliament, many of my constituents will probably string me up for recommending road pricing, because many commute into London. They did not appear to object, judging from the result of the general election. Therefore, with nearly 66 per cent. of the vote, I take a deep breath and repeat that I believe that road pricing is inevitable, particularly around our large cities.

Of course it is right that we should improve public transport. I have consistently campaigned to encourage British Rail to improve Network SouthEast. There are 10 railway stations in my constituency, so it is a constant interest of mine. I should like more people to use Network SouthEast and to commute by rail, not only for business but for shopping or whatever in town. That requires a better railway service. I do not wish to take up more time on that in this debate, but I shall return to discuss how British Rail may improve its service in future.

In urging British Rail or whoever operates the franchises of the rail service into London to improve the service, I add that there should be at the same time some reminder to individuals who automatically use their car that the cost will hit them each time they do so. That places in context the obvious cost of purchasing a rail ticket. As technology improves, road pricing will be the way forward. I do not necessarily claim that we ought to hypothecate the revenue from road pricing—that is for another, if also important, debate. Nevertheless, if the moneys from road pricing were devoted to improving public and private transport, that might ultimately lead to an improvement in road safety.

I have been an enthusiastic supporter of the deregulation of bus services, but, in common with many of my right hon. and hon. Friends, I do not regard it as a panacea. There are times when one must draw to the attention of the private sector the fact that it is missing out on something. That is beginning to happen in some areas.

To me, it is inconceivable that private bus operators do not identify the opportunities that present themselves. In one of my boroughs, the town hall has moved from Walton to Esher. Many of the residents of Molesey in part of my constituency do not have access to a car during the day or at all, and now find that there is no bus service between Molesey and Esher, whereas there used to be one between Molesey and Walton—which is in the constituency of my right hon. Friend the Member for Chertsey and Walton (Sir G. Pattie).

Minibuses are very flexible, yet there are constant complaints that there is little flexibility in the minds of bus operators. I wish that more publicity were given to the omissions of the private sector, as well as more encouragement for the role that it can play in providing public transport. Those of us who believe in deregulation and the role of the private sector should not, however, hold back in voicing criticisms when it appears that opportunities and initiatives are not being taken.

This important debate affects more of my constituents than would wish to be affected by it, and certainly more than realise that they are affected by the problems of road safety. The county of Surrey has a duty—probably more than many other parts of the country—to ensure that its schools, and adults in their places of work and elsewhere, pay attention to road safety. We ought to devise new ways of tackling that task. If we do, the future will be safer for ourselves and for our children. I urge the Government to continue the innovative work that they have begun, of finding ways to contribute to the welcome process of improving road safety.

12.31 pm

Dr. Robert Spink (Castle Point): I congratulate the hon. Member for Cheltenham (Mr. Jones) on his excellent maiden speech, and I look forward to his future contributions. I may tell the hon. Gentleman that when one rises to make one's first post-maiden speech, as I am now doing, the process is a lot less fearful.

Road safety is an important issue for south-east Essex, and the news is not all bad. There were fewer people killed on this country's roads last year than in any other in my lifetime—that is, since 1948. Britain has the best overall road safety record of all the European nations, and Castle Point is no exception. Its road safety is quite good, but we can and must do more.

Sadly, Castle Point has had its share of personal tragedy on the roads. Earlier, we heard a heart-rending speech from my hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel). Such tragedies are never more devastating

[Dr. Robert Spink]

than when they involve children, and my remarks will deal with how we can help that particular group. I am thinking specifically of youths aged between 17 and 21.

I welcome the Government's target of reducing road casualties by one third by the year 2000, and later I will suggest how my hon. Friend the Minister can achieve it.

There is a definite correlation between high speeds and the increased severity of road accident injuries. There is also a correlation between faster speeds and accidents occurring more frequently. There is less evidence for this assertion, although common sense suggests that correlation is positive.

The Minister said that drink and speed were twin evils. Drink-driving was indeed a great evil, but I believe that it has now largely been addressed. It is now socially unacceptable to drink and drive. Society has brought pressure to bear as far as it can. There remains a small core of people who continue to drink and drive, and I welcome the initiatives that the Minister is taking to deal with those people and to offer them hope. Speed must now be in the frame—the chief target for our attention. I believe that there is a subtle but significant change in the public perception of speed, as there was a few years ago in the public perception of drinking and driving. The public now view with great concern the exceeding of rational speed limits, which will become increasingly socially unacceptable over the years.

The Parliamentary Advisory Council for Traffic Safety is campaigning to reduce traffic speed. I welcome its efforts and look forward to the Government's new guidelines on speed, which I urge the Minister to issue as soon as possible. I also urge him to promote the implementation of two of the provisions of the Road Traffic Act 1991—the provision allowing local councils to implement variable speed limits and 20 mph zones without having to go through the Department, and the provision for the more extensive use of deterrent surveillance camera equipment.

In Essex, up to 50 per cent. of accidents involving serious injury or fatality are associated with two factors combined—speed and youth. The Minister has acknowledged the vulnerability of the 17 to 21 age group. The loss of young adults is a tragedy which affects every hon. Members' constituency. I draw the attention of the House to a parliamentary reply:

"Research studies show that young and inexperienced drivers have a much higher accident rate than mature drivers."—[*Official Report*, 23 July 1990; Vol. 177, c. *18*.]

I shall deal first with cars and then with motor cycles. With cars, there is an accident syndrome involving a combination of factors—young and relatively inexperienced drivers, powerful cars, young passengers and the hours of darkness. Those four factors add up to the lethal cocktail about which we have heard this morning from my hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham. It is an issue not only in this country but worldwide. Australia has a massive problem involving young people in powerful cars. In France, driving licences are granted only in stages. In Israel, young people under the age of 21 are not allowed to drive during the hours of darkness.

I ask the Minister to consider the possible use of P or R plates to phase in drivers who have just passed their test. In Ireland, the use of the R or restriction plate works extremely well and, as a result, that country has a far superior record on road traffic accidents involving young people. I urge the Minister to do the necessary research and to introduce measures along those lines. The R plate category could involve restricting not only speed but size of engine, which brings me to a quite different point.

The police are responsible under the law for reporting on serious accidents but they are not required to record the model of the vehicle. They can record that the vehicle was a Ford Escort, but it matters whether that vehicle was an RS2000 or a 1.3L model. That information is extremely relevant. It would be useful for analysing accidents and introducing controls so that such accidents could be prevented in future. I ask the Minister to look carefully at that issue.

We must have accurate accident data in order to reach the right decisions, implement the correct traffic-calming measures and identify areas where accidents are likely to happen so that they can be prevented. We do not want dead bodies on our streets. It is not good enough just to work on the basis of a gut feeling, which is what often happens now. We need sound systems for the collection, collation and analysis of data. We need also sound data bases.

The transport supplementary grant should be extended to cover intelligence and record gathering and analysis work. Each authority goes its own way. Each county council's highway authority invents the wheel, as it were. That is both ineffective and inefficient. The Department of Transport should give direction from the centre. I can help the Department. Essex county council's highways department has done excellent pioneering work. The Department of Transport ought to liaise with that department and use its work, thus providing a lead for other county councils. I congratulate Mr. Mike Self, the county surveyor of Essex, who has been chosen this year to represent his professional body.

I ask the Minister to consider extending the transport supplementary grants to cover the funding of other local road safety schemes, in order to increase public awareness of the importance of road safety. In particular, those schemes should begin with the very young, the three-year-olds, so that these vulnerable children can be educated in road safety. I congratulate the insurance company, General Accident, on having provided a considerable sum of money to promote the eastern region scheme for the education in road safety of three to six-year-olds. That scheme has proved to be extremely successful and should be continued, if at all possible. I urge the company to do that.

Motor cycle safety causes great concern, particularly in the age group 16 to 21. I did not and I would not allow my children to take motor bikes on the road. I do not see why my concern should not be brought to bear on all children in this country. I shall, I am sure, make few friends today when I say that if I could pass a law today that increased by just one year the age at which a young person could have a provisional motor cycle driving licence, I am convinced that we should save tens, perhaps even hundreds, of valuable young lives next year. That would be the use of legislation in a truly gratifying way.

I suggest that hon. Members should visit their local hospital's orthopaedic ward tomorrow where I guarantee they will find at least one young person in that age group who is the casualty of a motor cycle accident. That might help to control the rise in youth disorder in places such as Wood End, about which we heard today on the news, where motor cycles have been the focus of youth disorder.

I shall deal now with transport infrastructure, and in so doing I trust that I will not steal the thunder of my hon. Friend the Member for Basildon (Mr. Amess) but will develop the point that was made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Esher (Mr. Taylor).

Mr. Ian Taylor: My hon. Friend has twice referred to me as being "right hon.". There are times when I wish that I was, but the moment that a Back Bencher believes that he is right hon., *Hansard* immediately demotes him.

Dr. Spink: I am grateful for that correction and I accept it. I do apologise.

The hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms. Ruddock) made a cogent point about the use of public transport. The London to Tilbury and Southend line—the so-called misery line—fails to provide a proper service, is unreliable and forces more traffic on to the roads. It therefore has a detrimental effect on road safety in south-east Essex. In response to a parliamentary question, the Minister told me:

"BR has just let a contract for the survey and design part of the £50 million resignalling project which they believe to be the key to improving reliability on the London, Tilbury and Southend line. BR is considering what the best option for replacing the rolling stock might be. I look forward to receiving its proposals." [*Official Report*, 13 May 1992; Vol. 207, c. *107*.]

I am astounded by that answer. I am astounded that British Rail has not put forward its plans for rolling stock on that line and I call on Sir Bob Reid, its chairman, and particularly Network SouthEast, to get their act together and to make specific proposals, not next year, not next month, but next week, so that my hon. Friend the Member for Basildon and I can pursue the matter with the Minister on behalf of our constituents. Investment in rolling stock is the key to the development of the Transport infrastructure of south-east Essex.

Thanks to its generous transport supplementary grant of £42 million, Essex does not have a major problem funding small, low-cost engineering measures to alleviate local problems and black spots.

Humps have been used in my constituency. I take a slightly different view from other hon. Members who have spoken about the use of humps. Their use in Scrub lane in my constituency caused much controversy and, generally, people do not like them, but I assure the House that the people who live on Scrub lane like them. I checked yesterday with Essex county council and was assured that the humps had done their job. They have reduced traffic flows dramatically, have prevented Scrub lane from being used as a rat run and have reduced speeds dramatically. We must carefully consider traffic-calming measures and we must not write humps off altogether at this stage.

Essex's problem lies not in funding small, low-cost schemes but major capital infrastructure projects, which can have the most dramatic impact on reducing accidents and improving road safety. In a parliamentary answer my hon. Friend the Minister said:

"I shall give careful consideration to any proposals which the county may wish to make as part of their bid for transport supplementary grant and credit approvals for capital spending on local roads in 1993-94."— [*Official Report*, 12 May 1992; Vol. 207, c. *72*.]

I give notice that my Essex colleagues and I will press the Minister on this matter in the near future; meetings are already arranged.

I finish by congratulating the Government on their achievement in having reduced the number of accidents on the roads and also on their plans for the future. Their target to reduce road casualties by one third by the year 2000 is excellent, but there is no room for complacency.

12.49 pm

Mr. Piers Merchant (Beckenham): It is a great pleasure to follow my hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Dr. Spink), not only because this is the second time this week that I have spoken very soon after him but because he always expresses an interesting collection of ideas in an entertaining fashion. I hope that many of them will be considered carefully and I aim to develop some of those themes.

I also thank my hon. Friend the Minister for Roads and Traffic for introducing this debate and for giving us the opportunity to discuss an important matter. I also congratulate him for his encouraging words on a topic which must be of interest to everyone. If I were a statistician, I might be tempted to say that road deaths in Britain are in inverse proportion to traffic volumes, but, like other statistics—and recent opinion polls come to mind—I think that that would be an abuse of cause and effect.

Surely, the real tribute should be paid to Government policies of the past 13 years which can perhaps be measured in four general ways: first, education and persuasion, which have been most effective; secondly, proper enforcement of the appropriate laws and controls; thirdly, the improvement of road design and construction; and fourthly—although this is perhaps not so much a tribute to the Government as to the car industry—the improvement in overall car design so that cars can be better and more effectively controlled and can also withstand accidents.

I should also like to take this opportunity to pay tribute —I do not think that anyone else has done so today—to the emergency services. Surely, the effectiveness with which they now operate at accidents and in hospitals compared to 10 or 15 years ago must contribute greatly to the number of lives that are saved and to the fact that serious injuries are now less serious than they would have been some time ago.

As my hon. Friend the Minister said, in 1991 the number of fatal accidents on Britain's roads declined by 13 per cent. The number of serious injuries declined by 15 per cent. and of slight injuries by 8 per cent., but, of course, the overall figure is still too high. As my hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel) rightly said, one major incident in an area can immediately make the figures and the percentages rise dramatically.

As for the overall figure, if such a number of fatal injuries occurred in a major industry such as the coal industry, which used to have a very bad accident record, it would be the focus of far more attention. I hope that the day will dawn when people look back on the present figures—much improved though they are—and see them as unacceptably high and are able to say that the means were found to reduce them considerably. Indeed, I believe that many of the policies now being pursued will help to achieve that.

As further evidence of the considerable decline in the effect of accidents, I shall quote some figures from my constituency which back the national figures; although I should perhaps say that they are from the Bromley borough area, in which my constituency is located, as that

[Mr. Piers Merchant]

is a more accurate description. They show that the number of deaths was reduced from 15 in 1988 to seven in 1991—in other words, more than halved. The number of casualties was reduced from 1,795 to 1,510 and the total number of accidents declined from 1,453 to 1,254. That in itself is an illustration of a downward trend in the borough which has continued consistently for 15 years, and I congratulate Bromley borough on its part in helping to bring those figures down.

Bromley's policy has three features. The first is its policy to encourage the police to target enforcement, because although enforcement is important, targeting is even more vital. The second is the effectiveness with which road safety education has been carried out, including in schools, and I take this opportunity to congratulate the hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms. Ruddock) for accepting the great value of the national curriculum, which was not always accepted by Labour Members. Thirdly, there is what Bromley councils like to describe as the "remedial war", to improve standards of road conduct.

My hon. Friend the Member for Sutton and Cheam (Lady Olga Maitland) referred, quite rightly, to the tragedy of children being injured or killed in road accidents. My hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point discussed the bracket of youths and older children. In many ways, accidents that occur to children in the youngest-of-all bracket—from zero to four years old—are the most harrowing. When I was a young journalist I well remember attending my first inquest and being so upset by the evidence about the death of a three-year-old in a tragic accident that I had to leave the coroner's court, which did not endear me to my fellow journalists. The impact of even one such fatality can be a harrowing experience.

I am glad to say that between 1989 and 1990, the latest year for which I have figures, the number of accidents in Bromley borough involving that age group declined from 21 to 16. That is still 16 too many. Road safety officers in the area are concerned that children of that age are either not being correctly strapped into safety seats in cars or not being strapped in at all. More needs to be done, in educational terms, to focus on the importance of doing that. It can be difficult to get the message over because the advice and law have changed over the years. When my first child was born—she is now eight—the advice given was different from that which I must now apply to my second child, who is seven months old. In the past, a child had to be put in the back facing forwards, whereas the advice is now to put the child in the front facing backwards. There is still a major hurdle to overcome in explaining to ordinary parents the most effective means to use. There is clearly a deficiency in education and publicity and I hope that some effort will be made to deal with it.

I have already referred briefly to traffic volume, which the hon. Member for Deptford also mentioned. We should try to encourage, as far as possible, the trend to use other, safer forms of transport, particularly public transport. I welcome the reference in the Gracious Speech to the importance of placing more emphasis on the use of the railways.

I am not anti-motorist and I strongly reject some of the ideas put forward by Opposition Members because they appear, at least, to be anti-motorist. The problems cannot be solved by compulsion and should not be solved by cost either. We must maintain the essential rights and freedoms of individuals to choose their mode of transport, including private cars, which, in many ways, are irreplaceable. However, the rail system offers a safer and, in theory, more relaxing means of transport than road vehicles. So long as it is maintained competitively and made more attractive than travelling by road, it should succeed in helping to control the volume of road traffic by offering a viable alternative.

It is important for services to be sufficient and reliable. Several of my hon. Friends have referred to that this morning. The experience of travellers in the Beckenham area matches what my hon. Friends have reported. The commuter service, which should provide a far better alternative for travelling to central London than the roads do, is deteriorating. In what I regard as a scandalous abuse of its monopoly position, British Rail in the past week further reduced its peak travel services in the area. It did not cut services that were underused or underfunded. It seems that the cuts were made simply to fit the whims of timetabling. Not surprisingly, the result is that some people have already said to me that they will no longer travel by train because there are no longer convenient trains and that they will go back to using cars. That must be a retrograde step. I hope that the reforms promised by the Government will attract more people on to rail services which will control traffic volumes.

Traffic-calming measures are especially important in urban constituencies such as mine and such measures have been well used by Bromley borough council. The council has used road humps, which I should rather hear described romantically as sleeping policemen. Some of the other methods suggested must be considered carefully. I have some reservations about some of the road-narrowing methods used. Bromley has recently stopped using road narrowing as a means of calming traffic because at least one fatal accident has been caused by the way in which the road narrowing system was constructed.

Rat runs are a nuisance and a danger in urban areas, especially when they are linked with speed, which has been mentioned by a number of hon. Members. I welcome the attention being given to the problem. Red routes are an advance and will help by ensuring that traffic moves more smoothly. Smoothness is part of the formula. I like to think of the red routes as "Goodhart routes", named after my predecessor, because I know of his especial interest in and advocacy of that system of traffic control.

The hon. Member for Deptford mentioned advertising. I worked until recently in the advertising industry, although I no longer have any connection with it, I hasten to add. The industry is especially aware of the criticisms and concerns. I believe that the advertising industry has largely overcome the problems. It has made strenuous efforts to ensure that descriptions of new cars given in advertisements stress the benefits of the car, but do not encourage unlawful practices such as speeding.

To criticise advertising too heavily in that regard displays an underestimation of the human character. It implies that people are so gullible that if they see an advertisement in which a smart car is travelling fast along the road, they will be compelled to jump into their cars and ape that performance on the local roads. Humans simply do not behave like that. The advertisers and the companies are far more responsible; and it is not in their interests to

promote an advertisement that faces considerable criticism. Although it is a valid point, it has already been well addressed.

My hon. Friend the Minister referred to speed limiters on coaches and on heavy goods vehicles. That is extremely welcome. Like every other hon. Member, I have had the experience of driving on a motorway and suddenly finding that a huge lorry or coach is on my tail, and is hooting and flashing its lights to try to intimidate me into getting out of its way. Such vehicles have often been running at speeds well above the legal limit. A means of stopping that, other than having those vehicles tailed by police cars all the time, is welcome. Private motorists also indulge in unacceptable practices on the roads. In recent years, there has been a growth in misbehaviour, if I can put it like that, among motorists, particularly on motorways, where I have seen appalling examples of dangerous driving. That problem must be tackled through a dual effort that combines education and publicity with strict enforcement and penalties. That would deter those who feel compelled to burn everyone else off the road.

The Government deserve great praise for the effective action they have taken to reduce dramatically the incidence of drink-driving and to change the social climate. More action is still needed. However, I believe that existing police powers are sufficient. The hon. Member for Deptford suggested that we should go a step further and introduce random breath tests. I am concerned about the civil liberty implications of such a change, but it is also important to consider the practical application of random tests. To stop people at random would be a misapplication of police time and resources, especially if they found that 98 per cent. of those tested were below the limit because they had not been near a public house and had not taken a drink. At the moment the police are able to select, without much limitation, those people who are likely to have had a drink or those whose driving suggests that they have been drinking. The existing procedures represent a more effective use of their time and resources and I believe that the current law is adequate.

I accept that the drinks industry has done a great deal to combat drink-driving, but it has a responsibility to do more. However, I congratulate the Portman Group, a drinks-industry funded education council which has done a great deal to encourage social as opposed to anti-social drinking, which affects road safety.

A mixture of education, enforcement and improved traffic-calming measures have done a great deal to improve road safety, as is ably borne out by all the available statistics. By continuing that process we will see a further improvement in road safety in which the Government already have an excellent record.

1.7 pm

Mr. David Amess (Basildon): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Beckenham (Mr. Merchant) on his excellent speech. We missed him when he was absent from the House for five years and we welcome him back. I note that he has lost none of his eloquence.

I also congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Dr. Spink) on his post-maiden speech. He is not at all like Sir Bernard Braine, one of the greatest parliamentarians that I had the privilege to know. However, my hon. Friend demonstrated his wit and his charm and we look forward to his future speeches.

I also congratulate my hon. Friend on what he said about the Fenchurch Street line, which is an utter disgrace. I made that clear to the chairman of British Rail when he made his disastrous public relations journey with us from Basildon to Fenchurch Street. As far as my constituents are concerned, when it comes to the Fenchurch Street line, "Up with it we will not put." We intend to badger British Rail and, on a friendly note, Ministers, to ensure that in the first year of this Parliament my constituents get a decent service. I have three stations in my constituency, Laindon, Pitsea and Basildon, and my constituents provide the greatest share of revenue for Network SouthEast, but we get poor value for money.

Some months ago we had a similar debate on road safety. The whole of the House is united in its attempts to reduce the number of road accidents and deaths. I am sure that all hon. Members have had the harrowing experience of a constituent coming to the surgery to speak about the loss of a loved one. It is difficult to know what to say to someone whose child had been killed. At this stage in the debate it is unlikely that any hon. Member has anything original to say on road safety, but we must battle on. I look forward to new suggestions, if there are any. Hon. Members are united in a wish to see a reduction in road accidents and deaths. I shall cheer up the House by speaking about Basildon. With the demise of socialism the sun will never set on Basildon, thanks to some initiatives that I have in mind.

Dr. Spink: Would my hon. Friend like to join me in asking Basildon borough council immediately to remove the rather foolish, additional, confusing and distracting road signs stating, "Basildon is a nuclear free zone"?

Mr. Amess: You will probably regard that as irrelevant, Madam Deputy Speaker. I have the matter in hand, but I shall speak about it at a later date when more hon. Members are present.

I congratulate the members of our excellent Department of Transport team. They will discharge their duties well because many people behind them and many Opposition Members intend to make sure that matters about which we feel passionately will be acted upon as soon as possible.

As hon. Members have said, on average 12 lives were lost and 140 people were seriously injured on our roads each day last year. The figures are a considerable improvement on the previous year, in spite of the big increase in traffic, but there is certainly no room for complacency. Roads, drivers and vehicles all play a part in road safety. Enormous sums of taxpayers' money have been spent and will continue to be spent on necessary upgrading and improvement of roads.

I congratulate Conservative-controlled Essex county council on its commitment to improve road maintenance in my constituency, the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point and that of the hon. Member for Thurrock (Mr. Mackinlay), who may not entirely agree on that. The widening of the A13 and the development of the roundabout at Five Bells will be of enormous benefit to our three constituencies.

In spite of penalties on contractors, too many road maintenance schemes are behind schedule and that results in further deterioration. New bypasses and motorways are planned and some have been started. Bearing in mind the EC single market, I hope that there will be no delays in

[Mr. Amess]

that programme. A good road network boosts safety and cuts costs to industry. We are all united about the benefits of such a network for jobs and for increasing the prosperity of local businesses.

My hon. Friends the Members for Beckenham and for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel) spoke about rear seat belt legislation. That has certainly had beneficial effects. Our magnificent hospital in Basildon, which achieved trust status on 1 April, tells me that it believes that there would be an even greater reduction in injuries coming to the accident and emergency unit, particularly among children, if all passengers were belted up where practical, and rear seat belts were fitted in older vehicles. I know that my hon. Friend for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) does not entirely agree with us on that, but the rest of Essex is pretty much united.

My hon. Friend the Member for Wyre (Mr. Mans) last year introduced a private Member's Bill that dealt with road humps. I had the privilege to serve on the Committee examining that magnificent Bill, which has, since it was enacted, brought benefits. Normally, the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) is with us on a Friday, but perhaps he has been offered higher office within the Labour party. I have criticised road humps in Newham. I know that the local authority is doing its best, but it has gone over the top with the road humps in Capel road, which is used to drive mourners to East Ham cemetery. The number of road humps in it has made the journey impossible. I hope that the council will look at the matter.

The detection and recording by electronic means of the minority of selfish and unthinking drivers flouting the law and endangering other road users will be a powerful deterrent. Provided that the means are under strict monitoring and control, no driver need fear erosion of liberty. I hope that my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State will be able to confirm these safeguards at a later date. Drivers are citizens and deserve charter protection. I very much hope that they will get it.

Most hon. Members are drivers. They will know that, in the main, our errors inhibit road safety. My wife thinks that she is a good driver and I am a thoroughly bad driver. I detect aggression within society—one has only to walk along the streets to notice it. People seem to want to barge into each other rather than step aside. There is aggression on the escalators in the tubes and, above all, there is aggression on the roads. This is not just restricted to young people. Only last week, two men over 50, with their wives —perfectly respectable people—cut straight in front of me without indicating. I slammed on my brakes, but it happened so quickly that I did not even have time to use the horn.

I make this impassioned plea to both sides of the House. Let us ensure that good manners are returned to our roads. One may not have a lot of money, but one can be clean and tidy on the roads. It does not matter what car one drives; one can use courteous behaviour.

I am not sure whether we should make the driving test more difficult, but I look with horror on people who pass a driving test then pull into a petrol station and do not even seem to know where to put the petrol in. Often, they have no idea how the car is propelled. Perhaps what we need is a more sophisticated driving test. I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point. Is it right that a person who passes his driving test at 17 can celebrate with his friends, take the L-plates off, go out and have an accident? The son of a dear friend of mine was killed as a result of an accident like that. There are so many other examples and I commend my hon. Friend's suggestion.

There is good news—there has been a 25 per cent. reduction in motor cycle accidents and a 25 per cent. increase in the number of young people taking the full licence test for motor cycles. Even better, I note that the percentage pass rate is climbing as riding standards improve.

I am pleased that the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency, which is to be commended for its enterprise, is amending driving licence regulations for all types of vehicle.

I know that it is difficult to think up a new slogan each Christmas, but the Department of Transport's initiatives on drink-driving are working. The Secretary of State should know that there is strong backing for deterrents, education and tough enforcement of the law.

As recent reports have confirmed, drivers of high-performance cars are more likely to be involved in fatal accidents. It is all very well for me to say that, because I drive a broken down Escort, which has difficulty reaching 60 mph, let alone breaking the speed limit. Manufacturers' sales promotions for those and other vehicles must minimise the speed and performance aspects. Surely it is better to emphasise safety, economy, reliability, price and reductions in pollution. It is encouraging that insurance companies are rapidly increasing premiums for higher-performance cars. Saying that will make me unpopular with some of my business supporters in my constituency, but I believe in it strongly.

Rental companies, acting on bad experiences, are shedding high-performance cars from their fleets. Cars are clearly much more lethal at high speeds and too often innocent victims are killed or maimed.

The Aggravated Vehicle-Taking Act 1992 is beginning to bite and to affect the activities of the relatively small number of callous, youthful cowboys who steal cars and wreck lives and properties.

If some manufacturers can fairly be blamed for their promotion of higher-performance public road speedsters, equally they should be praised for continuously updating vehicles' built-in safety factors. The risk of death in an accident in an older car—prior to 1988—confirms that welcome fact.

I do not believe that anyone has mentioned the Vehicle Inspectorate today. It was one of the first executive agencies to be set up in 1988. Strangely, it has a low profile, but its important contribution to road safety is not sufficiently recognised and cannot be overestimated.

Many of the inspectorate's activities are directly linked to road safety via road worthiness. The independent National Audit Office issued an important report on the Vehicle Inspectorate earlier this year, which highlighted a significant increase in efficiency since its inception, but noted with regret that scope for further improvement was limited by Government policy, which I find puzzling. The Vehicle Inspectorate is not allowed any flexibility in its activities and is still subject to limitations. I gently chide my hon. Friend the Minister that such limitations seem out of line with Government policy and the Fraser report, by precluding the inspectorate from being market led and by not allowing the full use of its resources and services. I understand that a review of the inspectorate's status is

under way, and I urge my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport to speed up that process so that benefits to taxpayers and road safety may speedily accrue.

Furthermore, I hope that there is an injection of appropriate external advice to assist the inspectorate's board in the overdue progress to more effective, market-led techniques and activities. I am sure that the present competent executives would welcome the removal of shackles and I trust that the Secretary of State will have good news for us.

I end by informing the House of an initiative, as ever in Basildon. The Government have devoted much attention to the security of all types of vehicles. Manufacturers and retailers must continue to improve and install effective security devices. That will help buttress law and order and reduce costs. We have an epidemic of car thefts—nearly 600,000 a year. As we all know, the peak age for offending is 15. Trucks and coaches are also affected. I hope that the Department will do its utmost to encourage innovation and the greater use of security products, and not just on new vehicles. I know that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education spent a great deal of time on that when he was a Home Office Minister.

As ever, Basildon led the way on this. On Monday, the Basildon crime prevention and safety panel will launch an initiative called Take Mistake. Long before the media and the Home Office were talking about joyriding and an inter-agency approach, we were tackling it. Funding came from the police, social services, local authorities, commerce and industry, Victim Support, the police, education and the magistracy. The locations in the training pack are local, and the actors, music composers and producers are all locally based and have worked with the university of East Anglia on the project.

Although on Monday we shall focus on auto-crime to provide a story line, the theme is that choices have consequences. The video has trigger points for discussion, for example on drinking and on attitudes to authority and authority figures. Its use is intended for schools, youth groups and juvenile justice and probation groups. All secondary schools in Basildon will be visited by the police division and will receive a copy of the video.

I congratulate the Government on initiating this debate. This is a serious matter which is certainly worth our attention. Obviously, I agree with other Members about the progress of the past few years, but one death, one accident, is one too many. I understand that we are still to hear some original suggestions and I hope that next year or the year after we shall see further reductions in accidents.

1.27 pm

Mr. John Bowis (Battersea): It is always a great pleasure to follow my hon. Friend the embryo Baron of Basildon (Mr. Amess) and to hear his latest conquests in that area. My hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Dr. Spink) intervened to suggest that the signposts that warn people of the danger surrounding that area should come down. I now understand why those signs were put up. It is not so much a nuclear-free zone; rather, as John Betjeman used to rage,

"Come, friendly bombs, and fall on Slough",

so my hon. Friend was calling for the gentle tax bombshells to fall on socialist Basildon, and they did again and again at the national and local elections. I cannot wait to see them falling on the managers of the Fenchurch Street line, because I have no doubt that they will fall to his blasting before long.

As this is the first opportunity that I have had to speak under your deputy Speakership, Madam Deputy Speaker, I welcome you and congratulate you on your presence in the Chair. I was present when you were welcomed by a Member on the Opposition Front Bench who said that you were known for being kind to the less fortunate creatures on this planet, the furry ones. It was not pointed out, however, that your solution—we both have an interest in Battersea dogs home—is registration, and the preferred method is to implant a chip into the scruff of the dog's neck. You, Madam Deputy Speaker, may be bringing to the Chair a new form of discipline which right hon. and hon. Members will ignore at their peril. Nevertheless, we welcome you and wish you all success.

I welcome also my hon. Friend the Minister to his new post. He has come from the Ministry of Defence, which is entirely appropriate. There will be cross-party agreement that if this country's armed forces were ever to think of mounting a coup, the tanks charging towards Westminster would soon find themselves gridlocked in south Kensington. They would be unable to reach their target, and would have to set up with some Napoleon of Notting Hill instead. My hon. Friend's experience of getting tanks through is perhaps relevant to London's traffic and transport problems.

I welcome the Government's target of reducing road casualties by one third by the year 2000. I hope that it will be reached sooner, and be replaced by a target of a two thirds' reduction in the early years of the next century.

Reference has been made to the Parliamentary Advisory Council for Transport Safety's excellent statistics. Although it is good news that road casualties are reducing, the reality remains that last year, more than 4,500 people died and more than 300,000 were injured in road traffic accidents. PACTS points out that that means an average of 500 casualties in each of our constituencies. We would all do well to note that horrific figure and to seek to encourage the Government and everyone else involved in education and road safety to reduce it.

The comments of the hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms. Ruddock) about excessive speed were echoed in all parts of the House. However, sometimes it is not speed but slowness that causes accidents. Cars travelling too slowly in the wrong lane cause aggravation which can itself give rise to accidents. Nevertheless, speed is of the essence in road accidents.

PACTS' urban speed figures show that a pedestrian struck by a vehicle travelling at 20 mph is likely to survive with minor injuries, but that if he or she is hit by a vehicle travelling at 30 mph, the chances are that the pedestrian will be seriously injured or killed.

Vehicle speeds can be monitored, checked and penalised in many ways. Reference has already been made to the use of cameras. Although we do not want too much of a catch-you-out society, when lives are at stake the public ought to be made aware that cameras and other forms of technology are available in the battle against excessive speed and dangerous driving, and will be used in prosecutions.

Those who speed and the dangerous drivers should be reminded also that they may not be aware that they are being observed. I had a fascinating discussion with the Metropolitan police about the use of helicopters in

[Mr. John Bowis]

pursuing speeding drivers on motorways in particular. The driver may not see a police car or a post-mounted camera, but he may still be observed from the air, and his speed will find him out.

At the same time, we should be considering devices for limiting speed. We have heard references to the devices already used on heavy goods vehicles and coaches. Why stop there? Why can we not begin to install devices in ordinary family cars and use them to check not only speed but proximity to the car in front? I believe that it would be possible to produce mechanical devices whereby if one got too close to the car in front the speed of one's vehicle was automatically reduced. The motor industry should be investigating whether such advances are possible. They would have clear advantages not only in preventing accidents in fog but in dealing with the driver who regularly drives too close to the car in front.

Reference has been made to traffic calming and I concur with everything that has been said about it. Sometimes the road hump or sleeping policeman is the answer, although I am aware of the reservations of the emergency services in that regard. Certainly, it is both cruel and potentially dangerous to drive over a road hump someone who is being raced to hospital with a drip in his arm. On the other hand, I sometimes think that the emergency services protest too much, as I discover that road humps have been installed in the grounds of St. George's hospital. One has to strike a balance. Road humps are certainly popular with residents but there are other methods.

The hon. Member for Deptford was kind enough to refer to the Traffic Calming Bill introduced by my hon. Friend the Member for Wyre (Mr. Mans) of which I was a sponsor. That Bill increased the possibilities for action. Capes can be built out of road corners to prevent vehicles from parking too close to them. They are a great help, especially to the elderly who can see more of the road to cross and face less risk of being hit by an unseen fast car.

My hon. Friend the Member for Beckenham (Mr. Merchant) referred to the dangers of road narrowing. I favour the sort of road narrowing which means that someone driving too fast through a road barrier will lose his wing mirrors. That sort of measure encourages a driver to pause and think before he speeds. Road texturing is also useful. If one suddenly hears a noise or finds that the steering and wheels of one's car are behaving differently, one is more likely to slow down. Traffic calming represents an important way of reducing road accidents.

Much has been said about rat running. It has been said that there are few new points to be made in the debate, although I know that I can rely on my hon. Friend the Member for Chester (Mr. Brandreth) to come up with his no doubt ingenious measures in a moment. Rat running is one of the reasons for introducing red routes. All sorts of other measures can be tried, but if we close every rat run with a barrier or make it into a one-way street, we will not only make it difficult for Members of Parliament to reach their constituencies; we will simply pass the problem on to another street. When a road is closed, we inevitably receive letters from residents of a neighbouring road complaining that all the speeding traffic now uses that road. The council says that it will investigate, but that it will have to wait for the new system to settle down. In six months' time, the council may conduct another survey which may reveal that the next road needs attention. It may take three months for the matter to be brought up at the next council meeting and for the plans to be drawn up. The proposals then have to be consulted upon. A year later, the road in question is closed. Then, as sure as eggs are eggs, residents of the next road complain. The real answer is to deter by carrot, providing through routes that the traffic can actually run through.

The experiment in north London has shown that, provided that the red route is regarded as part of a package involving better public transport and other traffic-calming measures, it can play a part. Of the 11 per cent. extra traffic on that route, 9 per cent. was traffic from rat runs and only 2 per cent. was new traffic.

I have mentioned the improved pedestrian crossings. There are also four new bicycle crossings. There has been an increase in bus lane kilometres and 620 new parking spaces. On average, bus journeys on that route have been reduced by nine minutes and reliability has improved by 45 per cent. The point about a 36 per cent. reduction in road casualties has already been made. The red route can provide benefits, so long as it is sympathetic to the needs of the people who live and work alongside it and so long as no one thinks that it is just a new urban motorway. Furthermore, it must be appropriate to the time of day and there must be places for people to park and deliver goods.

The provision of more public transport is crucial. By that I mean not just improving public transport but providing new public transport. I represent an area of south London where public transport is woefully inadequate. Apart from a couple of stations on the Northern line, right at the edge, we have no underground lines. We need to press, and press again, London Transport to provide links south of the river and include that half of our capital city in its network. We need park-and-ride facilities on the perimeter of London and more access to the river so that it can be used for transport.

That bring me to the question of river safety. That is not the subject of today's debate, but the Minister may know that I have promoted Bills on that subject as a result of the tragedy on the River Thames when the Marchioness sank, with tragic loss of life.

Another point has been drawn to my attention by my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, South-West (Sir A. Grant). He would have liked to be here to raise it himself, as it was drawn to his attention by the Guild of Experienced Motorists. I refer to the danger to car ownership and vehicle safety of the grabber. That device is now available for sale for £150 to any car burglar who wishes to purchase it. It is a black box decoder, which is about the size of a video cassette. If, by means of the fancy remote control blipper on our key fob, we lock our car, beware. About 50 yards away there could be somebody with one of these black boxes who is directing it at the vehicle, thereby decoding the security code and knocking it out of action. I understand that normally that has to be done within minutes of the car being locked by the owner. However, there are sophisticated versions that, rather like a turbo-charged safe cracker, can flick through the codes until it reaches the right one and pops open the car. When the burglar has opened the car and taken out the valuables he can use the black box to lock it and switch on the alarm system again. When the insurance company receives the claim from a person whose car has been robbed, it tells him or her that there is no evidence that car has been unlocked. The implications are stark.

The police have already warned us of the risk involved in advertising skeleton keys for purchase by the public. If these grabbers flood the market, motorists will be faced with great problems. I hope that my hon. Friend will have discussions with the Home Office about ways to stop it.

It has also been pointed out that a fancy decoder may not be entirely necessary. One motorist in Manchester stood back from his car, pressed the remote blipper on his key fob to lock it and immediately another car, of a different make, parked and locked behind his, flashed its lights and all the buttons popped up on all the doors. It is imperative that car security systems are investigated. I ask my hon. Friend to consider that seriously.

I ask for more measures for cyclists. My hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel) referred to cyclists using pedestrian crossings, which are for pedestrians and not for cyclists. A dismounted cyclist may walk his bicycle over a crossing, but he cannot ride it, which is quite dangerous because motorists do not know whether to give way. I have constantly campaigned for better cycling facilities in London such as safe routes for cyclists.

Cyclists must act responsibly, which means not riding without lights on the highway at night and not riding on the pavement at any time of the day or night. The problem facing the police is how to identify and catch offenders because, unlike cars, bicycles do not have registration numbers. Perhaps we should try to find a way of placing registration marks on cycles that can be spotted as they pass and which the police could pursue.

I endorse entirely the points that have been made about the needs of disabled people, for whom pavement parking is an enormous problem. The irregularity of lamp posts and parking meters poses difficulties for people who have vision problems and who must tap their way along roads with their sticks. If the bottoms of posts are not painted white, partially sighted people will not be able to see them well. All these problems could be greatly eased.

I referred to slow drivers causing problems on motorways. I introduced a Bill in 1990, which did not make progress but which dealt with motorways for which a fourth lane was proposed. It offered an opportunity to legislate for minimum and maximum speeds. The maximum speed on a four-lane motorway could justifiably be increased to 80 mph, with a minimum of 65 mph in the middle lanes and 55 mph in a slow lane. That would stop the road menace who sits in a middle lane and prevents vehicles from overtaking.

My Bill required coaches to travel no faster than 65 mph. That would have kept coaches that get around the law, by being under 12m long, out of the fast lane. Too often, coaches—which, after all, carry human beings—belt along the outside lane and are unable to stop in an emergency. They are lethal and are potentially dangerous not only for passengers but for other road users.

The point has been made across the Chamber that we need a concerted campaign to improve road safety. Respsonsibility is placed on Ministers, transport agencies, families and, particularly, on schools to teach road safety and the basics of how young people will drive in the future. If we can reach the young mind and train it in good road practice we can build towards that day when we can reduce casualties by not only a third or two thirds but more.

1.49 pm

Mr. Andrew Mackinlay (Thurrock): This is my second speech in the House and some of my fellow Labour "new intakers" will accuse me of having a double whammy by sneaking here on Friday, but I was advised that Fridays provided an opportunity to catch the Speaker's eye and that there was some discretion about the subject of the debate in that there would be scope to discuss many issues under the subject of road safety.

I came to the Chamber to listen to the hon. Member for Basildon (Mr. Amess) who is close to me geographically, if not politically. I understood that today was an opportunity to raise a number of issues that are of concern to all hon. Members and our constituents and which relate to the hazards that they face on the roads. Therefore, I am pleased to have this opportunity to catch your eye, Madam Deputy Speaker, in a Chamber which is not divided by the usual political differences but is united in promoting the well-being of people using the roads.

I do not wish to refight or relive the general election, but during the election my predecessor suggested that the Labour party was advocating a complete block on the building of new roads. For the record, I must say that that was not true. We prudently said that if—or when—we came to office we would have a moratorium on road building and would take a long hard look to ascertain whether "value for money" was being taken into account and whether the best interests of the public and the environment were being served by additional expenditure on roads. That was a prudent policy and, although we did not win the election, I urge the Government to reconsider this and to satisfy themselves that expenditure on roads is in itself the best way to promote mobility and public transport and whether it is in every case the best way to promote and defend our environment.

I do not think that the country takes a sufficiently long view in respect of decisions to extend our motorways and create new roads, although I could advocate a number of areas in which the building of motorways is not only environmentally sound but improves the quality of life for people who at present must tolerate the environmental pollution of heavy transport passing through their towns and villages and the hazards involved in merely crossing the roads.

I pay tribute to the emergency services and in particular to the fire and ambulance services and the traffic divisions of our constabularies which do their very best to ensure that high standards of driving are maintained and that the law is upheld. I emphasise the fact that they have the harrowing job of dealing with distressing accidents, and that people too often take for granted the distress inevitably caused even to experienced men and women in the emergency services. Although they have to deal with tragic accidents day in, day out, it takes its toll and it is appropriate for the House to acknowledge that it is extremely distressing for those men and women, who deserve our thanks.

Many of us will have had a loved one or friend killed in a motor accident—often it is a child who has been run over or knocked off his bicycle. We should be vigilant and ensure that schools promote awareness of road safety, because more could be done, even at a time of cuts in resources in schools and in services such as the police, whose resources are also stretched. I fear that such

[Mr. Andrew Mackinlay]

education may be suffering. I urge the Minister and his colleagues to see whether there can be pump priming for road safety education in schools.

Another problem to be flagged up in the House is the appalling state of disrepair of many lorries and buses in road safety terms. The vehicles that are most guilty of pumping out fumes in urban areas are buses. I am troubled by the fact that, although many employees of bus companies or lorry owners are aware that they are polluting urban areas or driving buses or lorries that are not up to an acceptable standard, they are anxious about raising the problem with their employers. I do not wish to open up this debate too much, but the existing employment legislation has placed many principled people in a vulnerable position, and that is just one area. If they complain or refuse to take out a vehicle they are sometimes subject to dismissal, and remedies and protection under employment laws simply do not exist.

Mr. Morgan: May I offer an example of the problem that my hon. Friend has outlined? During the general election campaign I visited a local comprehensive school. The pupils were waiting to be collected from the school by bus, to be dispersed to the surrounding villages. They had to line up behind 11 clapped-out old buses for as long as 25 minutes, breathing in the diesel smoke, because none of those bus drivers could, with any assurance, switch off their engines in case they would not restart. The children were breathing in filthy carcinogenic fumes for some 20 minutes while waiting to get on the buses.

Mr. Mackinlay: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that legitimate anecdote.

I suspect that Ministers know that much of what is uttered in the House, particularly on Fridays, is true because they have experience of it. Unfortunately, there is an inertia on the part of the Government to do anything about it. I hope that the Minister will take the problem on board and perhaps get the Association of Chief Police Officers to have a blitz on buses and lorries, so that prosecutions are made, or at least warnings given, to ensure that standards are raised. School and public transport are in a competitive market and I fear that corners are cut in lorry and bus safety. I hope that that will be drawn to the attention of ACPO.

Another related problem is the enormous amount of debris on motorways, which presents hazards. It has often fallen from lorries that have been poorly loaded and sometimes overloaded. That makes me very angry and I want more vigorous prosecution of people who put in jeopardy the lives of other motorway users. Insufficient prosecutions are made and that fact should be brought to the attention of ACPO.

Several hon. Members have referred this morning to the need to extend traffic calming measures in urban areas. The last places where traffic calming measures are introduced, but where they are probably most needed, is in our poorer housing areas. Many of my constituents write to me from the Garrison Estates of Purfleet, South Ockenden and Tilbury, desperate for traffic-calming measures, but the available resources are limited and earmarked for an experiment. The local authority is left in a difficult and invidious position of having to identify one area in which traffic-calming measures could be introduced. When public demand is demonstrably shown by local residents for traffic-calming measures, resources should be made available and local authorities should be able to respond. I hope that the Minister will take note of my claim that the poorest areas are often most poorly served in terms of the resources available for the introduction of traffic-calming measures.

The people who are the most articulate and who know how to put legitimate pressure on their local authorities, and Members of Parliament, get traffic-calming measures. In some poorer areas, that facility is not available and the people living there get left out although their need is great.

The question of stress suffered by drivers, especially drivers who have a car provided as part of their work, as representatives, or as part of their high-powered jobs, has not been raised today. I refer especially to drivers in London. There is a maxim in London that people do not so much steer into a space as aim their car at it. There is an element of aggression in many drivers who are normally the least aggressive people, as there is an imperative that they must complete their journey at whatever cost. That is aggravated by stress and, in turn, causes further stress. I hope that the Minister feels that there is a need for greater research into the extent of stress experienced by people who use cars in their employment and a need for better education on the need to relax. Employers and employers' associations should be counselled on the need to restrain some of their employees from being over-zealous in completing their duties. I recognise, of course, that that may have an impact on salaries in many cases.

Many years ago, I suffered from hypertension while I was working for a trade union. I was paid by the trade union to argue to employers that people working on VDUs and in new technology should have the correct lights, the correct desks and the correct chairs. It was my duty to argue that there should be proper facilities for people to complete their jobs and that wrong furniture and wrong lighting could aggravate them physically and mentally. I had to drive around London, in a job in which it was difficult to control the work load, using a car with a manual gearbox. I became aware that an automatic would greatly relieve the stress that motorists have to endure.

I went to my trade union and said that it was nonsense for it to expect me to argue for good facilities for the members when I had to work in a vehicle that aggravated stress. To the union's eternal credit, it took my point on board and until I came to the House, my union car was an automatic! It made a profound difference to the physical and mental stress I experienced. That point has not been fully taken on board. I am a strong advocate of the use of automatic gearboxes, especially for people working in a commercial environment, because they alleviate stress and fatigue when driving in the London area. I hope that the Minister will take that point on board when he reflects on the debate.

2.3 pm

Mr. Gyles Brandreth (City of Chester): May I begin by joining other hon. Members in congratulating my hon. Friend the Minister for Roads and Traffic on his appointment? I welcomed the tone and the content of his speech.

I should like to bring to the attention of my hon. Friend a dilemma with which we are faced in my constituency. We

have an important road in Chester, Blacon avenue, which passes through the heart of the community with schools, shops, a church and playing fields running along its length. Children have been killed and injured on that road and yet we struggle to get traffic-calming measures introduced. We are clamouring for a pelican crossing right now. Why the struggle? It cannot simply be on the ground of expense, because, in a sense, traffic-calming measures are an inexpensive option compared with the cost of a child in hospital or in a mortuary. No, we struggle because our streets are still planned with only half of their users in mind. The elderly and the young are in the majority these days, but our streets are still being designed with the motorised minority in mind.

When we have more than 200 children a year killed on our roads and in the region of 20,000 injured, this remains a life or death issue, however much we welcome improved accident and death statistics. The problem of children being knocked down in the streets will not go away, because, like it or not, that is one of the places where they play. Children play primarily in or around their homes, and not always in back gardens because many children do not have them.

One of the earliest studies of this subject, detailed in the Department of the Environment's design bulletin No. 27, "Children at Play", showed that in a mixed-rise estate, the majority of children played on roads or adjoining pavements.

Sadly, the lack of thought given to the design of roads and streets remains a significant contributor to the high level of road accidents involving children. We need a change of attitude towards the use of the street. Street space should be better shared by all the users. Parents throughout the United Kingdom are strongly in favour of that. Surveys reveal—I know that hon. Members on both sides of the House treat opinion polls with a degree of reservation and scepticism—that two thirds of parents are concerned about the lack of play space for their children. The higher the housing density, the greater the concern. It is also clear that parents hold strong views on the design of their local environment and support safety measures, even when they restrict vehicle access.

Two essential changes in attitude are necessary to make residential areas safer for children. First, we need a major commitment to introduce the type of traffic-calming measures we have discussed today. Secondly, we should redesign existing and future streets to provide facilities for recreation and play. A ban on vehicles at certain times of the day and turning streets into playgrounds is not the answer. A better solution is to retain a street's function, but to make the available space more appropriate for play and recreational use.

We have talked about a range of traffic-calming measures from speed humps, widened pavements and changes in surface texture to alternative parking. I have been challenged to come up with an original contribution and, as I am the last or penultimate speaker, that is something of a challenge. My hon. Friend the Member for Basildon (Mr. Amess) was intrigued to know whether I could think of anything that had not already been suggested.

Good examples of shared space already exist in Britain where new housing estates have been developed—some of the best are in Warrington new town. Other parts of Europe have explored new, original ideas. Hon. Members may be aware of the Dutch concept of the "woonerf"—it is not one egg—where street space is more safely and better shared by all the different users. Before and after studies of "woonerf" provision in Holland show many benefits, including the provision of space where it is most needed, opportunities for enhanced play, which allows equipment and play material to be brought from home, a greater feeling of security for children, more opportunities for social interaction among people in the neighbourhood and a more pleasant environment for adults.

It is accepted that streets in a residential area should be shared by all the people in that area, the motorised and the non-motorised alike. One of the greatest advantages of that has been a reduction in death and injury.

Action must be taken to improve street safety and to change our priorities. In that context, we must begin to educate the planners, because parents already have the message, as has the Minister, because he is in the vanguard of moving us in the right direction. If we do not change our priorities children will continue to die. Time is not on our side. Traffic in housing areas is on the increase and the number of cars in the United Kingdom will rise to about 32 million before the end of the decade.

Being pro-safety does not mean that one is anti-car, although I fear that Opposition Members sometimes make that mistake. One can be pro-safety and pro-car. We welcome car ownership, but we want motorists to realise that they must share their environment. The provision of tunnels to enable badgers and other wildlife to pass under busy roads is widely accepted, but pedestrian crossings and cycle ways for children are frequently resisted until there is a death. That is tragic. We must not wait for more deaths before making the point.

Car manufacturers now produce vehicles that are safer and friendlier to the environment, but advertising continues to emphasise speed and performance. Hon. Members have spoken about driver training, but that concentrates on car handling rather than on road craft. We must adjust that.

Children are the greatest users of the outdoor environment in our country, but residential streets were designed primarily for car users and in some cases cars have virtually taken over. Plans for new residential developments have to include provision for adequate parking space but there seems to be no similar requirement for play and recreation space. Whole communities—adults and children alike—are affected.

As hon. Members have said, the majority of accidents involve children and the elderly—pedestrians whose physical and mental limitations make them the least suited to cope with modern traffic conditions. Children under 15 represent about 20 per cent. of my constituents, and their needs cannot be ignored. I welcome recent Government initiatives on safety education in schools and the initiatives outlined in the Minister's statement. The present situation requires nothing less than a truly comprehensive programme and a change of attitude by us all, because our streets are shared by us all. They are used by motorists, and the middle aged, of which I am a member, but they are also used by children, young people and older people who now make up the majority of our population.

2.12 pm

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: With the leave of the House I shall reply to the debate. It is a great pleasure to reply to a useful and wide-ranging debate which has covered the

[Mr. Kenneth Carlisle]

whole spectrum of road safety. Many Members have spoken and raised many issues and I hope that they will understand if I do not reply to them all. I shall certainly write to them on matters that I do not cover in my winding-up speech.

I listened with great pleasure to the maiden speech by the hon. Member for Cheltenham (Mr. Jones) and thank him for his courteous words about Sir Charles Irving, his predecessor. We shall hear much more about him, and I wish him well. It was also a great pleasure to hear second speeches from hon. Friends who are already accomplished campaigners. I listened with care to my hon. Friends the Members for Sutton and Cheam (Lady Olga Maitland), for City of Chester (Mr. Brandreth), for Castle Point (Dr. Spink) for Beckenham (Mr. Merchant), and to the hon. Member for Thurrock (Mr. Mackinlay). I welcome their enthusiasm and know that we shall hear them again.

The debate should be seen in the context of our policy for a balanced transport policy. There has been much talk about investment in public transport and we have, and intend to continue to have, a balanced transport policy. That is evidenced by our increasing support for public transport, for trains and for London Underground, and by our intention that buses should be used better. Safety is an important ingredient of that overall balanced strategy.

Before considering some of the issues that have been raised today, it is worth saying how much agreement there is between both sides of the House on road safety policy. In nearly every regard, any difference between us has been one of approach rather than of general thrust of policy. We all agree on the importance of road safety and on the need to ensure that all road users can travel as safely as possible. We agree that, although we can be proud of having one of the best road safety records in the world, we must strive to do even better. We agree that the right way to achieve that is to set a target for reducing the number of casualties on our roads. We have tried to do that and we are still striving towards that target.

We agree that no Government could achieve the reduction that we are seeking by their own actions alone; it must involve the whole of society. We agree that a casualty reduction cannot be achieved by concentrating on the single aspect of road safety. It is necessary to take forward road safety measures across a broad front. As my hon. Friend the Member for Basildon (Mr. Amess) said, we must strive for better behaviour and understanding by all road users. We must look for safer vehicles and better roads.

There was a strong feeling that we should do far more for the safety of children and that we should pursue traffic-calming measures vigorously and constructively. The safety of children was an issue raised forcefully by my hon. Friends the Members for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel), for Sutton and Cheam, for Esher (Mr. Taylor) and for Beckenham and others. We are all agreed that child road safety is an important subject, on which I no more than touched in my opening speech.

Last year, more than 8,000 children were killed or seriously injured on our roads. I can put these statistics in a more human perspective. Road accidents are the biggest cause of accidental death among school children. One child in 15 is likely to be killed or seriously injured while still at school, so every child will know at least one classmate who has been involved in a serious road accident. All of us know of individual tragedies. These casualties are a senseless waste of young lives. They are not natural disasters. They are man made and there is much that we can do to stop them happening. That is why, two years ago, we launched a major child road safety initiative to provide a focus for the action of the many agencies, organisations and individuals that can contribute to reducing the number of children killed or injured on our roads.

At the simplest level, we can protect our children by buying them bright clothes so that they can be seen by motorists when they walk home from school in dark evenings. We can encourage them to wear cycle helmets. The campaign that we ran last year increased the sale of helmets fivefold, but I look forward to the day when no child is bought a bicycle without also being given a cycle helmet. We can do much by making sure that children always wear seat belts in cars, as my hon. Friend the Member for Beckenham said.

It is not enough to buy our children protective equipment. All motorists have to take personal responsibility for their safety. Children are most at risk as pedestrians in urban areas.

Mr. Morgan: I am not sure that I have understood. Is the Minister suggesting that the parent or relative buying the cycle is obliged to purchase a helmet, or is he suggesting that a helmet must be considered an essential part of any bicycle sale to a child, just as seat belts are a vital part of any car sale, and that one would not be able to buy a bike without a helmet?

Mr. Carlisle: We do not follow that line. Parents should decide to buy a safety helmet when they buy a bicycle and all our persuasion and education is to that end.

Mr. Derek Conway (Shrewsbury and Atcham) *rose*——

Mr. Carlisle: I shall not give way. My hon. Friend has not taken part in the debate.

With the patronage of Her Royal Highness the Princess of Wales, last autumn we launched a major publicity campaign to persuade drivers to slow down when children are about. Stark statistics have been produced in the debate, but they are worth repeating. In a collision at 40 mph, there is an 85 per cent. chance that a child will die. At 20 mph, there is a 95 per cent. chance that he or she will survive. That is such an important message that we are maintaining the campaign this autumn for the second phase of television advertising, costing more than £2 million. In addition, as I said in my opening remarks, we are introducing highway engineering measures to make people slow down in residential areas.

Another way to improve child safety is to educate our children so that they are aware of the risk and of how to cope with it. As my hon. Friend the Member for Sutton and Cheam (Lady Olga Maitland) said, we must keep up the pressure. There are many examples of how that can be done. We are taking action and we are piloting an educational package for pre-school children. Perhaps I should declare an interest here as I not only live in the eastern region, where the scheme is being piloted, but have a three-year-old son, so hon. Members can be sure that at least one child is being taken carefully through that programme.

Some superb educational material has been developed during the project, and I pay tribute to those involved: the Transport Research Laboratory, which has helped to develop the material and is monitoring the scheme; the seven county councils running the scheme; and to General Accident Insurance Group, which provided generous financial support.

Ms. Ruddock: Perhaps the Minister is about to refer to my suggestion about the national curriculum. If the pilot that he is outlining were successful, could it find its way into the national curriculum?

Mr. Carlisle: I shall not go as far as the national curriculum, although we have all been deeply impressed by the hon. Lady's commitment to it. I also thank her for her kind words to me at the beginning of the debate.

We are developing a code of practice for children of school age to integrate road safety education into the national curriculum and we have developed teaching materials for use in secondary schools. It is not necessary for road safety to be treated as a curriculum subject in its own right. There are merits in its being seen by school children as an integral part of their lives and not as a subject that one studies before moving on to another. Road safety fits naturally into many of the core curriculum subjects. For example, when teaching mathematics, it is more valuable to use road safety statistics than those for wheat production in north America, which were used in my day. Vehicle stopping distances and impact energies can help to give real meaning to Newton's laws.

That programme is beginning to bear fruit. Provisional figures for last year showed that child road deaths fell by 9 per cent. and serious injuries by 13 per cent. The number of children killed or seriously injured on our roads is now more than 30 per cent. below the 1981-85 baseline, from which the target reduction was set, but we can and will do more. This is a long-term programme, involving the education of children, parents and motorists. I have every hope that it will deliver ever greater results. One of the messages that I have received loud and clear from this debate is that we must carry forward this programme successfully, with the support of both sides of the House. It is a subject of the keenest interest and the House has shown its determination to do better.

Traffic calming was a prevalent issue in the debate. Traffic calming is important not only in residential areas, so that people can have a better quality of life, but to reduce the accidents about which we have been talking, especially those involving children. Hon. Members raised concerns about the resources available for this programme. My hon. Friend the Members for Esher, for City of Chester and for Battersea (Mr. Bowis) showed particular interest in that and other aspects of traffic calming, as did other right hon. and hon. Members.

Money is being made available for these important initiatives. In the current financial year, more than £42 million has been set aside for local safety schemes, an increase of 38 per cent. on last year. The combined 1991-92 and 1992-93 transport supplementary grant allocation for these safety schemes will allow local authorities to build about 7,700 local safety schemes nationally which, we estimate, will save about 170 lives and prevent more than 2,000 serious injurries and 9,000 other casualties in any year. I can assure my hon. Friend the Member for Esher that those funds can be spent on traffic-calming schemes, such as 20 mph zones, where they are intended to improve road safety. It is open to any authority to spend more on road safety than the sum allocated under the TSG settlement.

Ms. Ruddock: I pressed the Minister on that point in my speech. The statistics of what we expect to achieve through these measures are so impressive in terms of lives saved and serious accidents prevented that there must be a case for an increase in Government resources. As we all know, local authorities operate under tight financial regimes. Many are capped by the Government and the option is not always available for them to increase their own resources. If the Government's targets for road safety are to be met, surely this is one of the most efficacious ways of getting the work done.

Mr. Carlisle: Each local authority must be responsible for its own priorities within the money available to it. The resources available, which are ring-fenced for these purposes, have been increased this year by 30 per cent. on last year and substantial sums are being made available. We are co-ordinating with local authorities to see how these schemes, which are in their infancy and being developed through research, can be better used.

The Traffic Calming Act 1992, which has been much mentioned, provides for regulations to qualify the powers available to local authorities for such purposes. We are undertaking much research into the effectiveness of designs, such as humps. We are trying to develop humps that are more convenient for emergency vehicles. Chicanes, road narrowings and so on are also under consideration. Many Members spoke of how these measures could be of huge interest to their constituents. It is essential that we carry forward this work with great speed.

Drinking and driving was mentioned, but not as much as other subjects. It is interesting that all hon. Members agree that our efforts during the past few years have been bearing fruit. Education, combined with deterrents, is reducing substantially the number of people who are willing to risk the folly of driving after they have had too much to drink. That shows that we should persevere in other areas, such as child safety. It is clear from anti-drinking and driving campaigns that if we persevere with a policy and a theme we can get results.

This debate has been most useful for me, as it has allowed me to garner the views of many right hon. and hon. Members. We must not only persuade, educate, be thoughtful and approach the issue intelligently but undertake research, collaborate effectively with local authorities and reform the way in which we deal with those who speed. We need also to deter speeding and to punish —and we will punish, where that is essential as a necessary means of deterrence.

We are all aiming at benefiting everyone in this country. We must ensure that accidents are reduced. We have already achieved some success, but none of us can be complacent. We all know that with effort, research and determination we can do even better.

It being half-past Two o'clock, the Motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at the sitting on Wednesday 20th May, the European Communities (Amendment) Bill may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.—*[Mr. Nicholas Baker.]*

CARDIFF BAY BARRAGE BILL

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That, notwithstanding the provisions of Standing Order No. 86 (Nomination of standing committees), any Standing Committee appointed for the consideration of the Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill shall consist of twenty Members, including not fewer than twelve Members sitting for constituencies in Wales.—*[Mr. Nicholas Baker.]*

Hon. Members: Object.

BANKRUPTCY (SCOTLAND) BILL

Ordered,

That the Bankruptcy (Scotland) Bill may be proceeded with as if it had been certified by the Speaker as relating exclusively to Scotland.—*[Mr. Nicholas Baker.]*

HOUSE OF COMMONS COMMISSION

Ordered,

That Mr. Paul Channon be appointed a member of the House of Commons Commission under the House of Commons (Administration) Act 1978.—*[Mr. Nicholas Baker.]*

Porous Asphalt

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Nicholas Baker.]*

2.30 pm

Mr. Tim Smith (Beaconsfield): I am delighted to have the opportunity to raise the subject of the noise and spray benefit of porous asphalt in motorway and road construction. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Minister for Roads and Traffic on his appointment to that important post, and thank him for staying so late in the afternoon, having already initiated and replied to an important debate on road safety.

The starting point for my remarks is the problem in my constituency of increasing noise from motorways. I believe that there are more motorways running through my constituency than through that of any other right hon. or hon. Member—the M4, M25 and M40. Each section is among the busiest on those respective motorways. The stretch of M4 is that between Heathrow and Maidenhead; the stretch of the M25 is that between two other motorways, where the traffic volume is already double the original estimate; and the stretch of the M40 is that between the M25 and High Wycombe.

It is hardly surprising that the Department now proposes to widen all three motorways to four lanes in each direction. I cannot see that it would be sensible to object, although that will cause my constituents considerable disruption, especially in respect of the M40.

I am concerned about the Department's further proposal for collector and distributor roads to run alongside the M25. That would add a further eight lanes —some have suggested that the number might even be 16 —to the eight that already exist. The intrusion into the green belt and the damage to my constituents' interests thus caused would be wholly unacceptable.

Mr. Ian Taylor (Esher): I entirely endorse my hon. Friend's remarks about the M25. Collector and distributor roads are of great concern in my constituency also.

Mr. Smith: I know that exactly the same damaging effects would be suffered by my hon. Friend's constituents.

Perhaps the most extreme example of the growing noise problem in my constituency is provided by the M40. When it opened 20 years ago, it was relatively quiet and perhaps even underused. With the extension of the M40 to Birmingham—which was not originally envisaged—traffic volumes have grown rapidly, as has the traffic mix. We now have many more heavy goods vehicles than we had only a few years ago and the noise is becoming intolerable.

The widening of the motorway offers my hon. Friend's Department an opportunity to examine further measures that can be introduced to deal with the noise, and I am grateful to my hon. Friend's predecessors for seeing representatives of the villages in my constituency and hearing at first hand their concerns and their ideas for tackling the problem.

How should we tackle noise from motorways and other roads? Basically, there can only be two possibilities; one can either treat the symptoms or remove the cause of any given problem. If there is a genuine choice between the two, I favour trying to eliminate the cause of a problem. That is the difficulty with measures such as earth bunds, special fences and tunnels. We have many of those. I am certainly not suggesting that I do not favour them. They

are absolutely essential and we shall need more of them in my constituency. But they do no more than treat the symptoms, and some of them are quite ineffective at surprisingly short distances from the carriageway. That is certainly true of fences. The sound hops over the top of the barrier and comes down within a relatively short distance on the other side. If one lives on the other side of a valley, a mile away from the motorway, the noise can come straight across and hit one in the face as it would if one were living only a few yards from the road.

I repeat that I am in favour of tacking the causes, and the main cause of noise on motorways is the interaction of tyres and road surface—although I dare say that there is some noise from engines. Anyone who has ever driven along a motorway and made the transition from a ribbed concrete surface to a black-top surface will know what I am talking about: there is an immediate reduction in the amount of noise thrown up from the road.

There is no doubt that some road surfaces are much noisier than others. The most noisy of all is concrete. I know that the Department does not accept that, but everyone I know believes it to be the case and common sense suggests to me that it is so. Ribbed concrete makes an awful lot of noise; black top makes less noise; and porous asphalt, which is the subject of the debate, makes considerably less noise than a conventional black-top surface.

Let me explain the advantages of porous asphalt, which I believe to be the answer to some of our noise problems. One advantage, which has nothing to do with noise, is that it would make an important contribution to improving road safety. The surface contains small holes so that, if it is raining hard, the water can go straight through, virtually eliminating spray. The Department has installed the two surfaces on opposite sides of a dual carriageway on the A38 in Derbyshire. I have seen a photograph of traffic travelling on both sides of that road in heavy rain. It is obvious that, on one side, the drivers can see practically nothing because of the amount of water that is being thrown up, while on the side with the porous asphalt surface the conditions are not too bad. That is an important fact. Surface water drains rapidly through the porous asphalt road surface.

From my point of view, the most important advantage of porous asphalt is that it significantly reduces noise, but it also has the important advantage of increasing skid resistance and reducing oncoming headlight dazzle in wet weather. I am sure that you, Madam Deputy Speaker, have driven along a motorway at night when it is raining hard and you will know that, after a time, one's eyes get very tired indeed. The porous asphalt surface reduces that damaging effect—another way in which it can contribute to improving road safety.

It is not as if the Department has not considered all those factors; it has. What concerns me, however, is the slow progress that it has made. As long ago as 1981—11 years ago—the Transport and Road Research Laboratory produced a report which said:

"the noise from vehicles running on porous asphalt is less than that generated on conventional bituminous surfacings or on textured concrete surfacings. The average reductions in average vehicle noise were approximately 4 db(A) for light vehicles and 3 db(A) for heavy vehicles."

That may not sound very much, but the amount of noise at any particular moment is significant. That is confirmed by what was stated later in this report. It says:

"These effects were approximately similar to halving the traffic flow or doubling the distance of the observer position from the traffic source. The noise benefits were not found to be dependent on the age of the surfacing. The low noise characteristics of the porous asphalt appeared related to the high acoustic absorption of the surfacing. Porous asphalt will lessen the incidence of 'splash' noise generated at the tyre-surface interface."

All those Transport and Road Research Laboratory conclusions confirm what I have said. It will come as no surprise to you, Madam Deputy Speaker, to hear that this surface is now widely used in Europe and elsewhere. France, Netherlands and Belgium lay over 1 million tonnes of asphalt a year. Substantial quantities are also being laid in Hong Kong. As one would expect, they have been laid in areas near to large conurbations.

Most regrettably, however, the position in the United Kingdom is different. No porous asphalt has been laid on a major trunk road or motorway for the past 20 years, apart from a trial section of 1·5 km laid on the A38 near Burton on Trent in 1984. The Department says that this material does not last, but the A38 road surface has lasted for eight years and I understand that it is still going strong. The cost is disputed. The Department says that this material costs more; the manufacturers say that it costs less. That may have something to do with cost benefit and value for money, but when it comes to value for money we need to take into account, on the benefits side of that equation, the massive noise advantages of laying this road surface.

I understand that the Department is also concerned about the overall strength of the surface. It may be that, due to the way that it is laid it is less strong at the surface, but we are talking only about a very thin layer at the top of a very deep section. If one cut a section through a motorway, one would find that its strength is to be found much lower down. The strength to take 38-tonne lorries is not found in the top three inches. We are debating only a very thin layer at the top of the section.

The Department also says that there are not sufficient quantities of the right kind of aggregate. I am advised, however, that that problem can be overcome. The Department also says that snow is a problem on this surface. That may be so, but we do not have snow all that frequently and, if we do, it should be dealt with quickly and not allowed to lie on the surface of the motorway. Normally it is cleared away quickly.

I have put forward my case as strongly as I can. I have seen a paper that was given as recently as 31 October 1991 to a BACMI seminar on this subject. The Department's representative, Mr. G. J. Bowskill, talked about pervious macadam and said:

"This material offers great potential for locations where traffic noise or spray is likely to be a problem, but it does have drawbacks over its long term performance as identified by the research."

The time has come to have a few more trials with this material. There ought to be a few more trial areas, and I should like one to be located in my constituency.

The environmental consequences of road surfaces need to be taken more into account than they have in the past. I understand that we want to achieve the most cost-effective road construction. That must be the Department's primary objective and there must be good opportunities for achieving it at the moment, because tenders must be coming in well below previous estimates.

There is no reason why we should not have a road surface that will be acceptable to my constituents. I

[Mr. Smith]

understand that the TRRL has now reported to the Department the successful results of the major trial of porous asphalt on the A38 Burton bypass in Staffordshire. BACMI suggests that there is

"little reason for the DTp not to adopt Porous Asphalt and issue the guidance note"—

which has been promised—

"allowing greater use of the material."

That is what I want to see—greater use of the material, because the way to tackle motorway noise is through its cause. I am sure that we shall have to put up with noise and will never eliminate it. The problem will grow, so we need to tackle its cause and the symptoms. This would be a cost-effective way of doing so.

2.45 pm

The Minister for Roads and Traffic (Mr. Kenneth Carlisle): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith) on securing this debate and on his interesting choice of topic. I shall deal with its wider applications and implications later.

We are all concerned about reducing the adverse effects of road traffic on local residents. At the same time, we can agree that we all want to keep traffic moving smoothly on the road network. It is worth recording that although the trunk road and motorway network represents only 4 per cent. of the overall network, it still carries about 32 per cent. of all traffic and more than half of all commercial traffic. The reduction of noise and spray is therefore a valuable goal which I wish to pursue. I respect the aims of my hon. Friend in wishing to protect his constituents from the noise that those major roads around and through his constituency create.

Porous asphalt is an open textured road surfacing material that permits surface water to drain through it rather than to remain on the surface. It was originally developed to reduce spray in wet weather, to improve visibility. As we discussed in the previous debate, the cause of accidents is often complex and there is little evidence to show that accidents are directly related to spray. Any spray reduction in marginal and wet weather improves drivers' visibility. Although that may appear to contribute to safety, we are not certain whether it does, because poor visibility in heavy rain also reduces vehicle speeds on conventional surfaces. In contrast, on porous asphalt drivers may travel faster.

Although initially spray is dramatically reduced by the use of porous asphalt, that benefit is reduced as the structure of the asphalt becomes clogged, preventing the rain from seeping through it. Consequently, any accident benefits from the use of porous asphalt are likely to be short lived.

By far the most important benefit of porous asphalt —I agree with my hon. Friend about this—was discovered during testing trials, when its ability to reduce noise by 4dB in dry conditions, and even more in wet, became apparent. As my hon. Friend said, that is the equivalent of halving the traffic flow and is achieved by noise on heavily used fast roads being absorbed into the pores of the material. This absorption of noise is only slightly reduced by aging and salting, unlike the spray reduction characteristic.

On the surface, if my hon. Friend will forgive the pun, porous asphalt seems to be a wonder mix. Regrettably, it has some disadvantages that we should consider in a balanced debate. It simply is not as durable as conventional surfaces and would therefore need more frequent maintenance. One particular problem is that once the surface starts to deteriorate, the rate of decline will be more rapid than with ordinary surfaces. That not only increases the cost of porous asphalt but results in more of those dreaded traffic cones, which are so hated by motorists and my hon. Friend's constituents. Porous asphalt has the disadvantage of being significantly more expensive and would force us to repair our motorways more frequently. The structural strength of the material is not quite as robust as conventional surfaces and, to compensate for that, the thickness of the material needs to be increased, pushing the costs up still further.

I am pleased to say, however, that our own research, together with that of the industry, is tackling this problem by trialling variations in the constituents and mix of materials. We hope that in a few years we shall have material which approaches the same life as conventional surfaces. Then things could be very different.

As part of our effort to improve road safety, we have had a policy since 1988 of maintaining a minimum level of skidding resistance for our roads. In simple terms, skidding resistance is the roughness of the road necessary to stop vehicles slipping. This is proving very successful and as a result we have seen a reduction in accidents of about 6 per cent. To achieve this level of skidding resistance, we roll into the surface a high-quality aggregate. It is not possible simply to roll aggregates into porous asphalt—they have to be bound into the whole structure, significantly increasing the amount used.

Aggregates with high skid resistance are in short supply in the United Kingdom and are therefore more expensive. Increased use of those aggregates would also mean more quarrying in environmentally sensitive areas and more haulage over greater distances. My hon. Friend disagrees with me about the availability of the material, but perhaps we can explore the issue. He also said today that this material is used in Europe and that we are being overcautious, but, equally, we must be cautious in making direct comparisons. European skidding resistance requirements are very much lower than in Britain and thus permit the use, on the continent, of cheaper and more plentiful aggregates. I am not prepared to compromise our safety requirements.

When weighing up the pros and cons of porous asphalt, two other aspects need to be considered. The first is winter maintenance. Because of its physical characteristics, ice tends to form earlier and clear later than with a conventional surface. I am told that that is because the cold is not conducted away so rapidly and when, as a result salt is applied, some will be lost in the open pores. That means that the amount of salt used and the frequency of spreading has to be increased, both of which cost more.

We also now know that salt can cause damage to bridges and structures as well as to adjacent vegetation. More salt used to de-ice the road means more saline solution running off into the surrounding areas, causing further environmental damage. Therefore, we all have an interest in reducing the total volume of salt which we put on our roads and which then spreads around the countryside.

Our trials have also shown that porous asphalt surfaces break up more easily where heavy braking and turning takes place and for the material to function effectively, the

integrity of the drainage paths through the material must be maintained. That cannot be guaranteed at present, especially in urban areas.

To sum up, we have in porous asphalt a material which provides significant noise reduction benefits as well as some spray reduction. At the same time, it does have some drawbacks—notably, its reduced strength and durability, greater cost initially and for future structural maintenance, and increased winter maintenance. There are also some environmental drawbacks which need to be balanced against the possible environmental benefits. It is a balance which I must strike when considering when it is sensible to use this product.

I am satisfied that we now have a specification for porous asphalt, which will allow its use for some trunk road and motorway applications, but only where conditions are regarded as suitable and its use is cost effective. It is technically not yet suitable for universal application—for instance, where heavy braking or turning occurs, in urban situations where statutory undertakers need to have frequent access to their equipment and where there are heavy concentrations of commercial vehicles.

Even where the conditions are acceptable, it may still not be cost effective to use. We must remember that the increased costs will have to be found from the Department's existing budget and it will mean less to be spent on new construction and maintenance elsewhere.

I am keen to use the material in the right place and I intend to allow a limited use of porous asphalt on trunk roads and motorways where the benefits can be shown to outweigh the drawbacks. My Department has produced a draft specification and advice note giving guidance on its use and I am asking it to proceed towards early notification to the European Commission for the necessary consultation in accordance with the notification directive. We will, at the same time, invite comments from the United Kingdom industry.

Once those procedures are cleared, we can proceed to introduce porous asphalt on to our roads. This will be limited but will be a step in the right direction.

I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Beaconsfield for requesting a debate on this interesting subject. We all have a great interest in trying to reduce noise on our motorway system. In my three weeks in the Department I have come to the conclusion that we must try to do better in that regard, because noise is one of the great pollutants of people's lives. The problem can be seen not only in my hon. Friend's constituency but further up the M40 towards Birmingham, so he has raised a very useful subject.

I hope that we can press forward with our trials and find a way to make our motorways less noisy.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at four minutes to Three o'clock.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 7 May 1992

NATIONAL FINANCE

Vehicle Excise Duty

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the arrangements for granting exemptions from vehicle excise duty.

Sir John Cope: The Government have reviewed, in the light of the introduction of the new disability living allowance on 6 April, the arrangements for exemptions from vehicle excise duty for disabled people.

People in receipt of the higher rate of the mobility component of disability living allowance will continue to be eligible for exemption and invalid carriages will also continue to be exempt.

We have decided to bring forward legislation to repeal, from a day to be appointed by a statutory instrument, that part of the Finance Act 1971 and the Vehicle (Excise) Act 1971 which exempts disabled passengers from duty in Great Britain and Northern Ireland. This is subject to the House approving the necessary Ways and Means resolution, which will be among those appearing in the Order Paper on 8 May.

Transitional arrangements will be made to ensure that all those who currently receive the exemption under the disabled passengers scheme continue to do so after the relevant legislation has been repealed.

Charitable Giving

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will introduce legislation for the measures he announced in his Budget to give further encouragement to charitable giving through the gift aid scheme and covenants.

Sir John Cope: Yes. As announced in the Budget, the forthcoming Finance Bill will include provisions to reduce from £600 to £400 the minimum limit on donations qualifying for tax relief under the gift aid scheme and to relax the rules for tax relief for some charitable covenants. We now propose that these changes should apply from today, 7 May, instead of 1 July as originally proposed.

The Inland Revenue will also be introducing simpler procedures for tax repayment claims by charities from 1 July.

I hope that charities will find these measures helpful and will make full use of them. Further details are given in an Inland Revenue press release published today.

Building Societies

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he has any proposals affecting the tax rules for building societies.

Mr. Dorrell: A question has been raised in current judicial review proceedings, not yet heard in the courts, about the validity of the composite rate tax—CRT—charge for 1986-87 to 1989-90 on interest paid to investors. It is suggested that legislation in 1991, in connection with the transition to new arrangements for CRT in 1985-86, has retrospectively changed the basis on which the CRT rates should have been set for the four subsequent years. Around £15 billion has been collected by reference to those rates.

The Government's view is that the composite rates for the years concerned are valid and I am clear that they were set in accordance with Parliament's intentions in passing the 1991 and earlier legislation. I do not believe, however, that it is acceptable for the Exchequer's claim to the amounts involved to be in doubt, possibly for a period of years. I therefore propose to bring forward legislation in the forthcoming Finance Bill to confirm the composite rates for the years 1986-87 to 1989-90 set in the relevant Treasury orders. This is subject to the House approving the necessary Ways and Means resolution which will be among those appearing in the Order Paper on 8 May.

Finance Bill

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he will publish the Finance Bill; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: The Finance Bill will be published on 20 May, subject to the House approving the necessary resolutions before them. These will appear on the Order Paper for 8 May. The Bill will provide for the implementation of those Budget measures which are not already law. As well as other measures, it will also include a number of technical changes to prepare the tax system for the single market, which have already been the subject of consultation.

PRIME MINISTER

Bankruptcy (Scotland) Act 1985

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make a statement on the allocation of functions associated with the operation of the Bankruptcy (Scotland) Act 1985 between the Secretary of State for Scotland and the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry.

The Prime Minister: I have approved a reallocation of policy responsibility for the Bankruptcy (Scotland) Act 1985 from the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry to the Secretary of State for Scotland, who already has administrative responsibility for the operation of that Act. This will take effect from 7 May 1992.

Bringing together the policy and administrative responsibility for the 1985 Act will facilitate the introduction of measures to control the rising cost of sequestrations in Scotland while at the same time maintaining an effective service.

The Secretary of State for Scotland will bring forward proposals for legislation at the earliest opportunity.

The Secretary of State for Trade and Industry continues to be responsible for all areas of insolvency law except those covered by the Bankruptcy (Scotland) Act 1985. His responsibilities are mainly set out in the Insolvency Act 1986 and the Disqualification of Directors Act 1986. They include the insolvency of registered companies in Scotland.

Armed Forces (Pay)

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make a statement about the pay of medical and dental officers in the armed forces.

The Prime Minister: The Armed Forces Pay Review Body has submitted to me a supplementary report on the pay of medical and dental officers in the armed forces. The report recommends a basic pay increase of 5·5 per cent. and additional pay adjustments which provide overall pay increases of between 5·5 per cent. and 9·5 per cent. The average increase is 5·6 per cent. The Government have decided to accept the recommendations of the Armed Forces Pay Review Body and to implement them in full with effect from 1 April 1992.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Agricultural Wages Order

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what measures he has adopted to enforce the provisions of the agricultural wages order; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: The Agricultural Wages Act 1947 requires the appropriate Minister to undertake prosecutions in order to enforce the provisions of the agricultural wages order in those cases where prosecution is considered appropriate. I and the Secretary of State for Wales have therefore arranged additional training for agricultural wages inspectors so that they are better able to meet the rigorous requirements of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 when preparing cases for prosecution.

Up to now, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Welsh Office Agricultural Department have taken civil court action to recover the underpayment of workers' wages. The deterrent effect of recovery actions of this kind is marginal and not commensurate with the resource costs involved. The Secretary of State for Wales and I have therefore decided to discontinue taking civil actions of this kind and to concentrate on criminal prosecutions. Civil actions can still be undertaken by the worker, or by the workers' union on his or her behalf, as indeed they are now. With the consent of the worker concerned, my officials will assist such actions by the provision of information obtained during the investigations of the agricultural wages inspectors.

My right hon. Friend and I are confident that this approach will result in a more effective enforcement effort, to the advantage of the worker and the industry as a whole.

TRANSPORT

Transport Council

Sir Anthony Durant: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the outcome of the meeting of the European Transport Council on 26 and 27 March.

Mr. MacGregor: The meeting of the Council of Transport Ministers was held in Brussels on 26 and 27 March. My noble Friend Lord Brabazon of Tara represented the United Kingdom on both days.

Agreement was reached on the aviation agreement with Norway and Sweden, based on article 84(2) of the treaty, extending the Community acquis to Norway and Sweden. The Council noted the progress made on the third package of aviation liberalisation measures, and discussed briefly a report from the Commission on aviation state aids. Lord Brabazon stressed the importance we attached to firm Commission action on aviation state aids.

Although no agreement was reached on proposals for a definitive regime for road haulage cabotage, some progress was made towards agreement on road passenger cabotage, with proposals for a phased liberalisation of non-regular services and liberalisation of some limited cross border regular services. It was agreed that the Commission should have further discussions with Switzerland and Austria on the implementation of the transit agreements.

Good progress was made towards reaching a final agreement on maritime cabotage, but a number of important elements of the package are still to be resolved.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Oil and Gas Resources

Mr. Duncan-Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he published the recent report on the development of the oil and gas resources of the United Kingdom, the Brown Book.

Mr. Eggar: I published the latest edition of the Brown Book on Thursday 30 April and arranged for copies to be placed in the Library of the House and the Vote Office. The report provides a detailed account of the development of the oil and gas resources during 1991.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Council of Ministers

Sir John Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish in the *Official Report* a statement of forthcoming business in the European Community's Council of Ministers.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The Development Council met on 4 May.

A joint Environment/Development Council met on 5 May.

The Foreign Affairs Council will meet on 11 and 12 May and will discuss the Commission's proposals for the future financing of the Community—the "Delors II package"—follow-up to the Union treaty and immigration policy. The Council will also consider recent developments in the negotiations of the general agreement on tariffs and trade Uruguay round, the Lisbon conference on aid to the former Soviet Union, relations with the Maghreb and the negotiating mandates for the association agreements with Romania and Bulgaria. Community trade and co-operation agreements with the Baltic states and Albania may be signed in the margins of the Council. A co-operation council with Israel is scheduled for 12 May.

The Internal Market Council will meet on 14 May and will discuss exchange of officials and customs code. The Council may also consider frontier controls; renting and lending rights; networks; the Berne and Rome conventions; the second company law directive; the third life insurance directive; the multi-annual programme on

services statistics; drugs precursors; procurement of services by the utilities; European company statute; contaminants in food; the CE mark and data protection.

The Health Council will meet on 15 May and will discuss the adoption of a directive amending directive 89/622 on the approximation of the laws, regulations and administrative provisions of the member states concerning the labelling of tobacco products and the marketing of certain types of tobacco for oral use. The Council is also likely to be invited to express views on a Commission draft directive for a ban on tobacco advertising. The Community action programme on nutrition and health, draft resolutions on future work on hereditary illness and acute human poisoning will also be considered. It will discuss progress in negotiating a regulation setting up a European drug monitoring centre and make a declaration announcing the holding of a European drugs prevention week during the United Kingdom presidency. Ministers may also consider a Commission report on AIDS; the anti-dumping code; health related activities in other councils; and pharmaceutical pricing and minimum standards for rehabilitation centres.

The Culture Council will meet on 18 May and will discuss the Commission's proposals for a Council directive on the return of cultural objects and a proposal for a regulation on the export of cultural goods. The Council will also consider a Commission communication on new perspectives for Community cultural action and the European city of culture programme after 1996. The Council will discuss the Commission's proposed action plan for the introduction of high definition television, HDTV; a public awareness campaign for books and reading; the use of permanent paper and the conservation of acid paper; the Lisbon conference on cultural sponsorship and copyright and neighbouring rights.

The Agriculture Council will meet on 18 and 19 May. It will discuss reform of the common agricultural policy, the 1992-93 price-fixing proposals and the agricultural aspects of the GATT Uruguay round. Milk products and wild game meat may also be discussed.

The ECOFIN Council will meet on 19 May. It will examine the German and possibly the Italian economic convergence programmes as part of its continuing exercise of multilateral surveillance. The abolition of fiscal frontiers will also be discussed. Alcohol rates and structures directives are also scheduled for discussion by the Council, as are the draft VAT rates directive and the draft 7th VAT directive which relates to trade in secondhand goods, antiques and works of art. The Council will consider relations with the former Soviet Union and the Commission's proposals for the future financing of the Community. They may also discuss the proposed capital adequacy directive.

The Energy Council will meet on 21 May and is likely to discuss the directives on the liberalisation of electricity and gas.

The Environment Council will meet on 26 May. It will discuss proposals for a regulation on the supervision and control of waste shipments and a directive on air pollution caused by ground level ozone. The fifth environmental action programme prior to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development summit, carbon dioxide emissions and energy efficiency will also be discussed.

EMPLOYMENT

Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service

Mr. Brandreth: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when she intends to lay before Parliament the annual report of the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service.

Mr. McLoughlin: I have today laid the ACAS report for 1991 before both Houses of Parliament. The report has been published today and copies are now available from the Vote Office.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 8th May 1992

TRANSPORT

British Rail (Finance)

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what the expected outturn is for British Rail's external finances for 1991-92; what will be the public service obligation cash ceiling for 1992-93; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: The information is as follows:

(a) British Rail's external financing requirement for 1991-92 was £1,446 million. This represented an undershoot of £76 million on the revised limit of £1,522 million. BR has exceptionally been given permission to carry forward £55 million of this undershoot, which results from delays in the delivery of rolling stock, to 1992-93. The external finance limit for 1992-93 has therefore been increased by £55 million to £2,096 million. BR will publish full details of the 1991-92 financial year in its annual report and accounts in early summer.

(b) The PSO cash ceiling for 1992-93 has been set at £1,040 million.

ENVIRONMENT

Flats over Shops Initiative

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment who will receive grant aid under the flats over shops initiative for 1992-93; and at what levels.

Sir George Young: Fifty-eight authorities in England will receive flats over shops grant aid totalling £5,027,500 for 1992-93. These are:

Flats over shops proposed allocations 1992—93

Region and Local Authority	*Allocation £*
Eastern	
Aylesbury Vale DC	44,000
Ipswich BC	88,400
Luton BC	60,000
North Bedfordshire BC	29,700
South Norfolk DC	7,500
St. Albans DC	16,300
Waveney DC	80,000
Wycombe DC	156,100
	482,200
East Midlands	
Boston BC	22,500
Chesterfield BC	57,500
Gedling BC	30,000
Leicester CC	198,000
South Kesteven DC	191,100
	499,900
London	
London Borough Bexley	46,400
London Borough Camden	231,500
London Borough Harrow	104,000
London Borough Hillingdon	48,700
London Borough Lambeth	236,500
London Borough Southwark	155,000
Westminster CC	220,000
	1,042,100
Northern	
Alnwick DC	80,000
Derwentside DC	130,000
Newcastle Upon Tyne CC	67,000
Tynedale BC	138,000
Wear Valley DC	85,000
	500,000
North West	
Barrow in Furness BC	27,300
Carlisle CC	35,100
Crewe and Nantwich BC	133,900
Chester CC	3,800
Ellesmere Port and Neston BC	56,600
Sefton MBC	97,300
South Lakeland DC	63,700
Trafford BC	93,000
	510,700
South East	
Elmbridge BC	60,000
Guildford BC	40,000
Hart DC	45,000
Hastings BC	100,000
Horsham DC	20,000
Hove BC	55,000
Newbury DC	144,000
Worthing BC	44,900
	488,900
South West	
North Dorset DC	76,000
Penwith DC	65,000
Restormel BC	11,200
Salisbury DC	26,200
Stroud DC	27,300
Torbay BC	200,000
West Dorset DC	82,000
	487,700
Yorkshire and Humberside	
Bradford MBC	100,000
Hull CC	116,000
Leeds CC	100,000
Sheffield CC	200,000
	516,000
West Midlands	
Sandwell MBC	200,000
Solihull MBC	52,500
Staffordshire Moorlands DC	53,500
Worcester CC	72,000
Wrekin DC	122,000
	500,000

HEALTH

1991 Census

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when the first computer-processed results from the 1991 census will be published.

Mr. Sackville: In his reply to my hon. Friend the then Member for Nottingham, South (Mr. Brandon-Bravo) on 5 March 1992 at columns *272-73*, my hon. Friend the then Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health announced a provisional revised timetable for the county and regional monitors, and for part 1 of the county and regional reports and associated statistical products.

Publication of these results is now under way. The first county monitor, that for the Isle of Wight, is published today by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys in a 1991 census county monitor. Copies of all the census monitors and reports will be placed in the Library as they are published.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Export Credits Guarantee Department

Mr. Butterfill: To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether the Export Credits Guarantee Department will be seeking an advance from the Contingencies Fund, against a summer supplementary estimate.

Mr. Needham: Parliamentary approval is being sought for a supplementary estimate class IV, vote 5 ECGD: export finance assistance, for additional provision of £1·2 million to meet a final claim under the cost escalation facility. This facility was closed to new business in 1984.

Pending approval by Parliament of the supplementary estimate, the expenditure concerned will be financed by a repayable advance from the Contingencies Fund.

British Technology Group

Mr. Butterfill: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will place in the Library details about the sale of the British Technology Group.

Mr. Sainsbury: The sale of the British Technology Group to a consortium led by CIN Venture Managers and BTG's management and employees was completed on 31 March 1992.

The sale proceeds totalled £27·75 million, with the possibility of further payments to Her Majesty's Government arising from the level of cash and net current assets at the time of completion, and from payments under a mechanism for the clawback of 60 per cent. of revenues in excess of those forecast on BTG's business plan over the next five years.

A document has been placed in the Library containing copies of: the sale and purchase agreement; of the articles of association of British Technology Group Ltd. and of its holding company, British Technology Group International plc, in each of which the Secretary of State holds a special share; and a schedule listing the institutional investors in BTG.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 11 May 1992

ENVIRONMENT

Local Government Finance

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals he has for the reform of the standard spending assessments in the light of the Audit Commission's report.

Mr. Squire: Standard spending assessments (SSAs) are based on extensive analysis, research and continuing discussions with local authority representatives. The Government are not proposing any major changes to SSAs although data from the 1991 census will be incorporated as soon as possible after they become available.

The Audit Commission is in the early stages of a study of standard spending assessments, but has published no recent report on the subject. We shall, of course, consider any recommendations which the commission may eventually make.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (!) why the capital financing standard spending assessment for Westminster for 1991-92 was set at a level higher than that required by the council; what effect this had on the level of poll tax in Westminster; and if he will give the comparable figures for Great Grimsby and Humberside;

(2) what considerations of policy led to the decision not to use the October figures of each charging authority's debt repayments as included in their budgets in calculating their standard spending assessments; and if he will give the basis of the assumptions which are used in fact.

Mr. Squire: The capital financial element of an authority's SSA is based on notional, rather than actual, outstanding debt. This is to ensure that all authorities are treated equally and that past and present policies with regard to financing capital expenditure do not affect SSAs. The use of actual debt would: penalise those authorities who have in the past chosen to use receipts to reduce debt; divert grant towards expenditure on trading services (which are specifically excluded from SSAs as they are assumed to generate income); and provide grant for those debt charges which are already covered by specific grants.

The method of calculating the capital financing SSA element for all authorities is set out in the Revenue Support Grant Distribution Report (England). The underlying basis of the calculation is set out in annex VII of the SSA Handbook on Background and Underlying Methodology—copies of both documents are in the Library.

The following table sets out the information requested:

	1991-92 capital financing SSA element	*Equivalent net revenue expenditure*	*Effect on community charge if net revenue expenditure were equal to SSA*
	£ million	*£ million*	*£ per head*
Great Grimsby	0·627	1·650	−16
Humberside	44·489	36·293	+13
Westminster	20·610	7·252	+85

Urban Regeneration Agency

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what consultations he has had, and proposes to have, with local government and other interested bodies with regard to his proposals for establishing an urban regeneration agency; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: The Department will consult on the proposals to establish an urban regeneration agency.

Waste Disposal Facilities

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what criteria he adopts when determining planning applications referred to him, or for decision by him following an appeal, that relate to the tipping of household waste and other rubbish.

Mr. Baldry: Each called-in application and planning appeal is determined on its merits, having regard to the provisions of the approved development plan and any other material considerations.

Building Products

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the balance of trade in building products in each of the past 10 years.

Mr. Baldry: The information requested is as follows:

Year	*Imports*	*Exports*	*Deficit*
1982	1·85	1·31	0·54
1983	2·28	1·35	0·93
1984	2·63	1·45	1·18
1985	2·71	1·60	1·11
1986	3·03	1·46	1·57
1987	3·56	1·54	2·02
1988	4·17	1·59	2·58
1989	4·70	1·85	2·85
1990	4·65	2·15	2·50
1991	4·00	2·17	1·83

All figures are in £ billion at current prices.

Rugby League Stadium, Dewsbury

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the result of his deliberations on the planning application to build a rugby league stadium in Dewsbury.

Sir George Young: My right hon. Friend has requested more information about alternative sites for the proposed stadium. He expects soon to receive and assess the further views of interested parties, before a final decision is made about the planning application.

Barkby Thorpe, Leicester

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has now received the report of the inspector into the Barkby Thorpe, Leicester, methane site; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: The Secretary of State expects to receive the inspector's report shortly and will consider it carefully before reaching his decision. I shall ensure that the hon. Member receives a copy of the Secretary of State's decision when it is available.

Environment Week

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what contribution his Department is to make towards the environment week, 16 to 24 May, sponsored by the Civic Trust.

Mr. Maclean: I will launch the midlands region environment week at the Green Show in the national exhibition centre on May 14. Lord Strathclyde will be launching a leaflet explaining how the public can help to prevent summer-time smog. Officials are discussing other opportunities for participation with the Civic Trust.

Standard Spending Assessment, Great Grimsby

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment for what reasons his standard spending assessment estimate for capital financing for Great Grimsby in 1991-92 was lower than Grimsby's budget expenditure; how much difference this made to the average poll tax in Grimsby; and if he will make good the difference.

Mr. Squire: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave earlier today.

Nitrous Oxide Emissions

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give an estimate of the impact of the introduction of catalytic converters on United Kingdom emissions of nitrous oxide from road transport.

Mr. Maclean: Before the introduction of catalytic converters on cars, road transport made a small contribution to United Kingdom emissions of nitrous oxide. Measurements made on the exhaust emissions of cars fitted with catalytic converters show that emissions are a factor of 3-5 higher. Nevertheless, even when all the United Kingdom vehicle fleet is equipped with catalytic converters, road transport emissions will still be small compared with other sources, particularly soils and nylon manufacture.

Catalytic converters will in any case reduce emissions of other oxides of nitrogen by around 75 per cent.

Homelessness

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give the latest figures of households accepted as homeless by local authorities following mortgage repossessions for England and Wales.

Mr. Baldry: Local authorities report quarterly on the number of households accepted under the homelessness provisions of the Housing Act 1985, distinguishing where the main reason for loss of the last settled home is mortgage arrears, but they do not separately identify those which were subject to repossession.

The latest estimate is 3,700 such households in England, in the quarter ending December 1991.

For information about Wales I would refer the hon. Member to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his latest estimate of the comparative public sector revenue costs of housing homeless families in *(a)* Greater London and *(b)* in English non-metropolitan areas by (i) providing them with newly built council dwellings, (ii) providing them with council dwellings, newly acquired from the private sector and improved for letting and (iii) providing them with bed-and-breakfast accommodation; and if he will publish these figures on a comparable basis with those published in his replies to the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) on 16 January 1987, *Official Report*, columns *331-32* and on 4 March 1987, *Official Report*, column *637*.

Mr. Baldry: I have looked carefully at the basis on which such an answer can be given and have concluded that the information is not available in a form which enables a valid comparison to be made.

Water Supplies (Pollution)

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what consultations his Department has undertaken with the relevant authorities to ensure that local authorities are given adequate guidance in responding to pollution incidents affecting water supplies;

(2) what consultations his Department has undertaken to improve the emergency provisions guidance given to local authorities in responding to pollution incidents affecting water supply.

Mr. Maclean: Local authorities have special responsibility for private water supplies. DOE and Welsh Office consulted the local authority associations and other relevant bodies in preparing the joint circular on private water supplies issued in December 1991, in which paragraph 6.11 deals with the response to pollution. Water companies are responsible for the wholesomeness of public water supplies, but the Water Supply (Water Quality) Regulations 1989, which were also the subject of consultation, require water companies to notify local and district health authorities of any event which, by reason of its effect on water supplies, is likely to give rise to a significant risk to the health of local people. The Departments have also published guidance on safeguarding the quality of public water supplies, which includes advice on emergency procedures; water companies are advised to consult local and district health authorities with regard to the appropriate steps to be taken when incidents occur. As a result of the Water Act 1989, the National Rivers Authority became responsible for pollution incidents affecting controlled waters used for water supplies.

Planning Regulations

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are his plans for new regulations governing development by local planning authorities or on their land.

Sir George Young: New regulations to replace the Town and Country Planning General Regulations 1976, together with associated secondary legislation and policy guidance, are currently being prepared. My right hon. Friend and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales intend that the new arrangements should be in force by the end of June. Their main features will be:

—local planning authorities will continue to be able to grant themselves planning permission for development carried out by them, such as schools or local authority housing, and will also be able to grant themselves permission for development undertaken jointly with another person, such as a joint venture with a housing association;

—for all other development proposals to be carried out on local authority-owned land by other parties, planning permission will have to be sought from the responsible development control authority. (Thus a county council which is, for example, seeking to dispose of land with planning permission will have to apply to a district council, unless the development is a "county matter" (minerals and waste in England; minerals in Wales); and the district council would have to apply to the county council for development which is a "county matter");

—local planning authorities will now have to make a planning application to themselves or to another local planning authority and will be subject to broadly the same statutory procedures as other applicants;

—applications must be publicised as prescribed by a development order in the same way as applications from the public;

—to avoid a conflict of interest, applications may not be determined by a committee, sub-committee or officer responsible for the management of the land or buildings concerned;

—planning permission granted to local planning authorities for development by them or jointly will not pass to subsequent owners of the land. For example, an authority will not be able to grant itself planning permission for council housing, then change its mind and sell the land with planning permission to a developer.

In addition,

—a new direction will be made requiring the Secretary of State to be notified of all local planning authority development proposals which do not accord with the provisions of the development plan, giving him the opportunity (if he so decides) to call them in for his own decision;

—an order will be made to prevent the public from being excluded from committee meetings at which local authority development proposals are discussed; and

—a circular will be published explaining the new arrangements.

The Government believe that the new regulations will reconcilee appropriately local planning authorities' need to carry out their statutory functions with safeguards on accountability and publicity.

I am making this announcement in advance of the new arrangements taking effect, to allow local authorities time to take account of the changes and to modify their procedures accordingly.

TRANSPORT

Ethnic Minorities

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he has taken to recruit members of ethnic minorities in top grades of employment at his Department.

Mr. Norris: Recruitment for senior grades is undertaken by the Recruitment and Assessment Services Agency on behalf of the Civil Service Commissioners.

In order to aid the recruitment of members of ethnic minorities to senior grades the agency has formed links with universities, tertiary colleges and ethnic minority communities. Recruitment literature reflects a multi-racial work force; and validating selection procedures are in place to ensure that selection is fair and non-discriminatory.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many and what percentage of officers in grades 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7, respectively, and overall in his Department are members of ethnic minorities.

Mr. Norris: The numbers and percentages of non-industrial ethnic minority staff identified in the Department and its agencies at 1 April 1991 are:

Grade	*Total number of respondents*	*Number of ethnic minority respondents*	*Percentage of ethnic minority respondents*
1	1	0	0
2	4	0	0
3	18	0	0
4	20	0	0
5	88	1	1·1
6	144	4	2·8
7	660	20	3·0
Total	935	25	2·5

These figures are based on responses to a voluntary confidential survey of staff. Overall, 4·8 per cent. of all respondents to the Department's ethnic origin surveys are of ethnic minority origin.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when his Department last conducted a survey of the ethnic origin of its employees; when it next plans to do so; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: The Department completed a full survey of the ethnic origin of non-industrial staff in January 1991. A targeted re-survey took place in September 1991, and further targeted re-surveys will be conducted where necessary.

Ethnic origin information is sought from all new entrants. The Department's ethnic origin database currently records 86 per cent. of staff.

M1-M62 Link

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment has been made of the implications of surface temperature inversion for visibility on sections of the proposed yellow route for the M1-M62 motorway link on the Calder Valley.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: No such assessment has been made at this early stage.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list all the sites of recognised vertebrate/invertebrate and ecological interest which will be affected by *(a)* the proposed yellow route and *(b)* the proposed purple route of the M1-M62 motorway link.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: I will write to the hon. Member with a list of these.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his estimate of the relative proportion of green belt affected by *(a)* the proposed yellow route and *(b)* the proposed purple route for the M1-M62 motorway link.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: 80 per cent. of yellow route would be situated in green belt and 99 per cent. of the purple route. This is reflective of one of the design objectives, which is to minimise the effect on property.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his latest estimate as to the number of public representations received *(a)* in favour and *(b)* against (i) the proposed yellow route and (ii) the proposed purple route for his suggested M1-M62 motorway link.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: More than 5,000 responses have so far been received, covering a wide range of issues. We have yet to analyse them.

The purpose of consulting the public and representative bodies at this early stage in the scheme development is to listen to and learn from those affected. The comments received often relate only to localised matters rather than agreeing or disagreeing with any particular overall route.

Fishing Boats (Registration)

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proposals he has to revise the Merchant Shipping Act 1989 to prevent foreign fishing boats registering as British.

Mr. Norris: An order amending the 1988 Act provisions dealing with entitlement to register a vessel as British, is being prepared. It will reflect a recent ruling of the European Court of Justice (commonly known as the FACTORTAME case) and will have the effect of permitting wider European ownership of British registered vessels.

Sheffield-Manchester Motorway Link

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his policy with regard to a Sheffield to Manchester motorway link.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: There are no proposals in the current roads programme to provide a new motorway link between Sheffield and Manchester. There are, however, a number of schemes in the programme which will improve journeys between the two cities. These include proposals for a new motorway link from the M1 to the M62 between Wakefield and Huddersfield; widening of the M62 between junctions 18 and 24; and improvements to the A616/A628 corridor. I shall, of course, keep the long-term trunk road network under review.

M11 (Services)

Mr. Haselhurst: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects completion of the services area on the M11 motorway at Birchanger.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The contract specifies completion of construction by August 1993.

Motorcycle Licences

Mr. Day: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proportion of motorcycle licence holders were provisional licence holders in 1990; and what this proportion was for 1981 to 1985.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Since the advent of driving licences that are valid until age 70 it has become difficult to produce exact figures on licence holders. However, information from the national travel survey 1988-1990 indicates provisional motorcycle licence holders account for nearly 10 per cent. of motorcyclists. This is about the same as the 1985-86 survey although the number of motorcycle licence holders has decreased by about a third over this period.

Bus Deregulation

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when his Department received a copy of the recently published report, "Local Bus Deregulation and the Consumer".

Mr. Freeman: The report has not been submitted formally to my Department, but we are aware of its publication.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Mr. Anthony Benton

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will intervene in the case of Mr. Anthony Benton to refer the conviction to the Court of Appeal.

Mr. Jack: Representations from Mr. Benton which have been submitted on his behalf are being considered to decide whether there are any grounds to justify our intervention.

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the hon. Member for Walsall, North will receive a reply to his letter of 22 April concerning Mr. Anthony Benton.

Mr. Jack: My right hon. Friend hopes to reach a decision on the case shortly. I will write to the hon. Member as soon as a decision has been reached.

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when it is expected the Police Complaints Authority will decide on any disciplinary proceedings arising from the arrest and conviction of Mr. Anthony Benton.

Mr. Charles Wardle: This is a matter for the West Midlands police and the Police Complaints Authority.

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if the contemporaneous notes taken after the arrest of Mr. Anthony Benton are included in the papers of the case submitted to the Police Complaints Authority; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: These are not matters for my Department.

Immigration Guidelines

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to revise the guidelines for dealing with hon. Members' representations in immigration cases.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I have no immediate plans to do so, but the guidelines are kept under review.

Police Cells

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will announce a time-table for reducing the number of prisoners in police cells; how many prisoners were so detained at the latest date for which figures are available; and in which police authority areas;

(2) when he expects Operation Container to be discontinued;

(3) what representations his Department has had about the future of Operation Container and the problems it has caused for the police service;

(4) if he will be meeting representatives of the greater Manchester police authority to discuss Operation Container; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Operation Container was set up specifically to deal with the shortage of prison accommodation in the greater Manchester area caused by the destruction of Manchester prison in April 1990. Since then, the prison population has risen and there is now a general shortfall throughout England and Wales of prison accommodation available to house all those who have been committed to prison by the courts. Measures have been taken to make more effective use of prison accommodation, and new accommodation is being added to the estate.

Nevertheless, on 7 May there were still 1,638 prisoners in police cells for whom places could not be founed in prisons. They were held by the following police forces:

	Number
Avon and Somerset	43
Bedfordshire	21
Cambridgeshire	20
Cheshire	36
Cleveland	29
Cumbria	31
Derbyshire	15
Devon and Cornwall	22
Durham	34
Dyfed	24
Essex	13
Greater Manchester	233
Gwent	2
Hampshire	3
Hertfordshire	14
Humberside	30
Lancashire	114
Leicestershire	21
Lincolnshire	13
Merseyside	71
Metropolitan	203
Norfolk	11
North Wales	15
North Yorkshire	19
Northamptonshire	28
Northumbria	79
Nottinghamshire	34
South Wales	61
South Yorkshire	45
Staffordshire	11
Suffolk	19
Surrey	14
Sussex	2
Thames Valley	24
Warwickshire	11
West Mercia	6
West Midlands	40
West Yorkshire	130
Wiltshire	18
Total	1,638

My right hon. Friend the Member for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker) when Home Secretary met a delegation from the greater Manchester police authority on 9 March. My predecessor as prisons Minister, my right hon. Friend the Member for Mitcham and Morden (Mrs. Rumbold), also met a delegation and visited Manchester to see Operation Container at first hand. I have had no request for a further meeting. I know that it was made clear to the delegation that although changes in the prison population made it impossible to predict when the use of police cells would cease the problem was regarded as extremely serious and the task of bringing it to an end was a top priority for the prison service.

Neither I, nor my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary regard the detention of remand or sentenced prisoners in police cells as acceptable either for the prisoners or the police. I hope that the measures which we have taken and the availability of new prison places will soon have an impact on the numbers. I cannot give a precise timetable, because the rate of progress is of course vulnerable to changes in the numbers of prisoners committed to prison by the courts.

Overseas Voters

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the number of overseas voters in each parliamentary constituency.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The number of overseas voters included in the electoral register for each parliamentary constituency will be published by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys in the annual reference volume, Electoral Statistics 1992, series EL No. 19, in the summer. Details of the figures will be placed in the Library shortly. The number of overseas electors included in the draft electoral register for 1992-93 was given in answer to a question from the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) on 3 March 1992 at column. *102.*

Young Offenders (Suicides)

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many young offenders have committed suicide in custody in 1992, 1991, 1990 and 1989.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The number of prisoners under the age of 21 years who have died as the result of an act of deliberate self-harm in each of the years 1989 to 1992 is as follows:

Year	Number
1989	11
1990	10
1991	5
[1]1992	5

[1]To 11 May.

Football

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it his policy to introduce, in the current session of Parliament, legislation outlawing the sale of tickets for, and on the day of, a football match without the authority of the home club to do so; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The Government are committed to introducing this offence when parliamentary time allows, but that is unlikely to be in this Session.

Sunday Trading

Sir Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prosecutions have taken place over the past 12 months on breaches of the Sunday trading laws.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information requested is not yet available.

Welsh Boundary Commissioners

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the Welsh parliamentary boundary commissioners and any assistant commissioners, giving their period of office and any appropriate qualifications.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Madam Speaker is chairman of the commission. The other members are:

	Appointed by	Period of office
The hon. Mr. Justice Anthony Evans	Lord Chancellor	April 1989—31 December 1992
Mr. W. P. Davey CBE, DL, IPFA	Home Secretary	March 1989—31 December 1992
Mr. M. P. McLaggan JP, DL, MA	Secretary of State for Wales	March 1989[1]—31 December 1992

[1]First appointed in July 1980.

No assistant commissioners hold appointment at present. The deputy chairman is required to be a judge of the High Court. No other formal qualifications are prescribed.

PRIME MINISTER

EC Committee of the Regions

Ms. Quin: To ask the Prime Minister if he will now make a statement on United Kingdom regional representation on the EC Committee of the Regions agreed at Maastricht.

The Prime Minister: Ministers are considering the nomination of the 24 United Kingdom members (and 24 alternates) on the Committee of the Regions.

Minister for War Veterans

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Prime Minister if he will appoint a Minister for war veterans, widows and dependants, within either the Ministry of Defence or the Department of Social Security.

The Prime Minister: Responsibility for matters affecting war veterans, their widows and dependants forms part of the departmental remit of a number of Ministers. There are no plans to change this arrangement.

Lockerbie Bombing

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister (1) if he will make a statement on the representations made to the United Kingdom Government by the Government of Libya about the proposed extradition of two Libyan nationals in relation to the Lockerbie bombing;

(2) if he will discuss with the President of the United States the representations made to both of them by the Arab League in relation to the Lockerbie bombing and policy towards Libya; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: We have had various approaches from Libyans and intermediaries over the Lockerbie bombing. None of them indicates that Libya is ready to comply with United Nations Security Council resolutions 731 and 748. We have worked closely with the United States and France and shall continue to do so.

War Crimes

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Prime Minister if he will state the Government's policy towards war crimes in the Channel islands.

The Prime Minister: The Government's policy is that people who have committed murder, manslaughter or culpable homicide as violations of the laws and customs of war in German-held territory during the second world war should not be able to use the privilege of residence in the United Kingdom, the Isle of Man or any of the Channel Islands to escape justice.

Church Livings

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Prime Minister for how many church livings he has the responsibility of appointment.

The Prime Minister: I am responsible for recommending clergy to Her Majesty the Queen for appointment to 206 benefices where the Crown has rights of presentation. Of these, 126 belong to the Crown in full right, while appointment to the remaining 80 is undertaken alternately or sequentially depending upon the number of other patrons having rights of presentation to those benefices.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Radiation

Mr. Flynn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will have powers to require the publication by the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority of safety reports dealing with radiological risk to the public, under the new arrangements for oversight of the nuclear programme.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. Friend has the same powers as those previously held by the Secretary of State for Energy. It has been UKAEA's practice over a number of years to issue reports annually on the radiological effect of its operations. This information is given both in a safety report and in a report on the Radioactive Waste Disposal by AEA Establishments. I am arranging for copies of the latest reports to be placed in the Library of the House.

Bank of Credit and Commerce International

Mr. Vaz: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he and his officials have had any meetings with the liquidators of BCCI in the last *(a)* two months and *(b)* one month.

Mr. Hamilton: My officials met Mr. Morris and Mr. Richards, two of the joint liquidators of BCCI, on 26 March 1992.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he has received a copy of the Government of Abu Dhabi's proposal for compensation of the victims of BCCI; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hamilton: My officials have been supplied with a copy of the joint liquidators' report to the court dated 16 March 1992 containing a 52 page summary of the proposed agreements between the liquidators of BCCI and the Government of Abu Dhabi. I understand that the High Court is to consider these proposals on 11 May 1992 at which time all interested parties will have the opportunity to give their views. If the proposed agreements are approved by the Court acceptance of the compensation offered by the Government of Abu Dhabi will be a matter for individual creditors of BCCI.

Computer Software

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on discussions between the European Community and the United States of America, and in GATT, on patenting of computer software.

Mr. Needham: The draft final text of the trade-related intellectual property rights (TRIPs) agreement of the GATT Uruguay round is a good one overall for United Kingdom business and industry. It is consistent with United Kingdom domestic law and will not preclude the Patent Office from excluding computer software patents.

Regional Enterprise Grants Scheme

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when the changes to the regional enterprise grants scheme that were announced on 6 March will be introduced.

Mr. Sainsbury: The changes to the regional enterprise grants scheme that were announced on 6 March 1992 by the then Secretary of State for Trade and Industry were subject to clearance from the European Commission. Now that this clearance has been received I have decided, in consultation with the Secretaries of State for Scotland and Wales, that from 18 May these changes will become effective and that the innovation element of the scheme will be extended to all inner city task force areas, city challenge areas and the Scottish urban areas which already qualify for the higher level of support under the consultancy initiative.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Gibraltar

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will take steps to allow the Gibraltar Government direct and independent access to the European Commission and Parliament on all those matters that presently fall within their competence.

Mr. Garel-Jones: No. Gibraltar's interests are represented by the British Government in the European Community.

Treaty on European Union

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs who decides disputes about the interpretation of the translation of the text of the treaty on European union.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The treaty makes it clear (article S) that the text in each of the Community languages is "equally authentic". Disputes about the texts are for the parties to resolve among themselves. Where they concern areas of the treaty within the jurisdiction of the European Court of Justice they may ultimately be referred to it for decision.

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on what date he published or intends to publish, the text of the treaty on European union; and if he intends to also publish any explanatory guide or other descriptions of its provisions and implications.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The text of the treaty on European union was published as a Command Paper (Cm 1934) on 7 May. Further information on its provisions is contained in memoranda submitted by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and Her Majesty's Treasury to the Foreign Affairs and Treasury and Civil Service Committees respectively. Copies are available in the Library.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will set out the provisions of article 7a as referred to in the revised article 100a(i) in paragraph (22) of article G of the Maastricht treaty; and if he will indicate where article 7a is located in the various European Community treaties.

Mr. Garel-Jones: Under paragraph 9 of article G of the treaty on European union the present article 8a of the treaty of Rome becomes article 7a (and articles 8b and 8c become 7b and 7c). Present article 8a was added to the treaty of Rome by article 13 of section II of the Single European Act.

Article 7a states:

"The Community shall adopt measures with the aim of progressively establishing the internal market over a period expiring on 31 December 1992, in accordance with the provisions of this article and of Articles 7b, 7c, 28, 57(2), 59, 70(1), 84, 99, 100a and 100b and without prejudice to the other provisions of this Treaty.

The internal market shall comprise an area without internal frontiers in which the free movement of goods, persons, services and capital is ensured in accordance with the provisions of this Treaty".

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether the treaty on European union he signed at Maastricht on 7 February is the text circulating in Conf-UP-U-EM 2002/1/92; in what language was the version he signed; who translated it into English; what check his officials made of the accuracy of that translation; and when an accurate text will be provided in Parliament and published.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The Treaty signed at Maastricht was subsequently circulated as CONF-UP-UEM 2002/1/92. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs signed a version in English translated by European Community linguists. Officials and FCO translators were fully involved in meetings with linguists before 7 February to finalise the texts. The text as signed was made available to Parliament immediately thereafter and was published as a Command Paper on 7 May.

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has in his possession a copy of the proposed treaty of Rome as it would be following ratification of the treaty of European union.

Mr. Garel-Jones: There is not yet an official publication of the treaty of Rome as amended by the treaty on European Union. The treaty on European union has been printed as a Command Paper (Cm 1934).

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs by what enactment article 100A(i) of the treaty of Rome, which is to be replaced in accordance with paragraph 22 of article G of the Maastricht treaty, was inserted in the treaty.

Mr. Garel-Jones: Article 100a was added to the treaty of Rome by article 18 of the Single European Act which came into force on 1 July 1987.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether the text of the treaty of Rome used as a basis for the amendments to that treaty in the treaty of European union is the same as the text of the treaty of Rome issued in September 1988 by HMSO as Cm 455.

Mr. Garel-Jones: Yes.

Bangladesh

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been made to the Bangladesh Government concerning reports of a massacre at Lougong in the Chittagong hill tracts; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We have expressed our concern about these reports to the Bangladeshi authorities who have told us a judicial inquiry will be conducted. We will take a close interest in the report of this inquiry.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been made to the Bangladesh Government to allow UN observers into the Chittagong hill tracts.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: None. We doubt whether there is a role for UN observers in the hill tracts.

EC Commissioners

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has received concerning proposals made by any Commissioners of the European Economic Community concerning changes in or replacement of the commissioners or presidency of the Community; and when he expects any such proposal to be published.

Mr. Garel-Jones: A declaration attached to the treaty on European union provides for a review of the size of the Commission by the end of 1992. The Commission has made no proposals regarding commissioners or the presidency.

BCCI

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with the Government of Abu Dhabi concerning that Government's proposal to compensate the victims of the Bank of Credit and Commerce International.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has had no such discussions, but I raised the plight of BCCI staff and depositors in the United Kingdom during my visit to Abu Dhabi last October. The Abu Dhabi authorities were made aware that we should like to see depositors get as much of their money back from the BCCI as possible and the employees given fair severance terms.

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Crown Courts, Yorkshire

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what is *(a)* the capital expenditure and *(b)* the revenue expenditure on each crown court in Yorkshire for each year since 1979.

Mr. John M. Taylor: It has not been possible to obtain the information requested in the time available but I will write to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Church Appointments

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department for how many church livings the Lord Chancellor has the responsibility of appointment.

Mr. John M. Taylor: My noble and learned Friend the Lord Chancellor is responsible for making appointments on behalf of the Crown to 464 benefices where the Crown has rights of presentation. Of these, 194 belong to the Crown in full right; while appointment to the remaining 270 is undertaken alternately or sequentially depending upon the number of other patrons having rights of presentation to those benefices.

Covenants on Open Land

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what representations he has received about covenants on open land; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Lord Chancellor has received and is considering around 100 letters from Members of Parliament and the public expressing a range of views on the Law Commission's report on obsolete restrictive covenants published in July 1991.

Legal Aid

Mr. Michael O'Brien: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what further steps are being taken to review the availability of criminal legal aid in cases where defendants are in custody.

Mr. John M. Taylor: A defendant to criminal proceedings is eligible for legal aid if, in accordance with the provisions of the Legal Aid Act 1988 and legal aid regulations, a court decides that it is in the interests of justice that legal aid be granted and that the defendant's financial resources are such that he or she requires assistance in meeting the costs. The team conducting the review of financial conditions for legal aid is now considering legal aid in all criminal cases. A consultation paper will be issued in the summer.

Repossessions

Mr. Battle: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will give the latest figures for repossessions in England and Wales by month in tabular form.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The table gives the total number of mortgage possession actions entered, suspended orders and orders made in England and Wales during January, February and March of this year. These figures do not indicate how many houses have been repossessed through the courts as not all of the orders made will have resulted in the issue and execution of warrants of possession. At this stage the figures are provisional and therefore liable to revision in the future.

Mortgage possession actions in England and Wales during 1992

Month	*Actions entered*	*Suspended orders*	*Orders made*
January	14,223	7,052	5,813
February	13,781	5,902	4,938
March	14,465	6,201	5,807

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the total number of confirmed cases of bovine spongiform encephalopathy by county or region in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland to the latest available date.

Mr. Gummer: The information requested to 1 May 1992 is as follows:

County	*Confirmed cases*
ENGLAND	
Avon	1,123
Bedfordshire	144
Berkshire	299
Buckinghamshire	469
Cambridgeshire	174
Cheshire	1,779
Cleveland	65
Cornwall	4,052
Cumbria	1,304
Derbyshire	950
Devon	5,586
Dorset	4,209
Durham	187
Essex	229
Gloucestershire	1,368
Hampshire	1,670
Hereford and Worcestershire	915
Hertfordshire	177
Humberside	227
Isle of Wight	347
Kent	916
Lancastershire	1,403
Leicestershire	1,163
Lincolnshire	390
London	28
Manchester	62
Merseyside	40
Norfolk	1,019
Northamptonshire	470
Northumberland	242
Nottinghamshire	288
Oxon	835
Salop	1,205
Somerset	4,929
Staffordshire	1,164
Suffolk	604
Surrey	458
Sussex East	691
Sussex West	1,213
Tyne and Wear	11
Warwickshire	509
West Midlands	26
Wiltshire	3,063
Yorkshire North	1,998
Yorkshire South	167
Yorkshire West	259
WALES	
County	
Clwyd	720
Dyfed	2,549
Glamorgan M	104
Glamorgan S	142
Glamorgan W	24
Gwent	385
Gwynedd	166
Powys	521
SCOTLAND	
Borders	111
Central	50
Dumfries	498
Fife	98
Grampian	330
Highland	91
Lothian	42
Orkney	18
Shetland	5
Strathclyde	487
Tayside	133
Western Isles	1

County	Confirmed cases
NORTHERN IRELAND	
County	
Antrim	135
Armagh	26
Down	78
Fermanagh	36
Londonderry	50
Tyrone	73

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the total number of confirmed cases of bovine spongiform encephalopathy by county or region in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland from 1 January until the latest available date.

Mr. Gummer: The number of cases confirmed for England, Wales and Scotland from 3 January 1992, and for Northern Ireland from 17 January 1992, to 1 May 1992 is as follows. Many of these cases will have a date of clinical onset of disease, and indeed date of report, before 3 January.

	Confirmed cases
ENGLAND	
County	
Avon	204
Bedfordshire	24
Berkshire	54
Buckinghamshire	88
Cambridgeshire	33
Cheshire	357
Cleveland	13
Cornwall	741
Cumbria	331
Derbyshire	258
Devon	948
Dorset	728
Durham	35
Essex	52
Gloucestershire	188
Hampshire	226
Hereford and Worcester	154
Hertfordshire	22
Humberside	32
Isle of Wight	45
Kent	130
Lancashire	347
Leicestershire	187
Lincolnshire	63
London	7
Manchester	16
Merseyside	15
Norfolk	239
Northamptonshire	94
Northumberland	50
Nottinghamshire	50
Oxfordshire	176
Shropshire	223
Somerset	946
Staffordshire	482
Suffolk	109
Surrey	89
Sussex, East	133
Sussex, West	233
Tyne and Wear	3
Warwickshire	80
West Midlands	5
Wiltshire	491
Yorkshire, North	391
Yorkshire, South	31
Yorkshire, West	51
WALES:	
Clwyd	156
Dyfed	565
Glamorgan M	15
Glamorgan S	37
Glamorgan W	5
Gwent	79
Gwynedd	34
Powys	104
SCOTLAND:	
Borders	30
Central	10
Dumfries	169
Fife	17
Grampian	69
Highland	17
Lothian	12
Orkney	5
Shetland	2
Strathclyde	118
Tayside	25
Western Isles	0
NORTHERN IRELAND:	
Antrim	33
Armagh	5
Down	15
Fermanagh	5
Londonderry	12
Tyrone	16

Meat Depots

Mr. Michael: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether distribution and transit depots handling packaged meat fall under the category of cold stores as defined in the draft Fresh Meat (Hygiene and Inspection) Regulations 1992; and what requirements these depots will have to meet.

Mr. Gummer: Yes. Distribution and transit depots handling and storing packaged meat fall under the category of cold stores as defined in the draft Fresh Meat (Hygiene and Inspection) Regulations 1992. Such premises will, therefore, have to comply with the requirements applicable to cold stores laid down in those regulations in order to operate in the single market. The extent to which individual requirements of the draft regulations apply will depend on the operations carried out at each premises. Businesses can obtain advice from their local MAFF animal health office.

HEALTH

Tobacco Advertising

Mr. Merchant: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether she is reviewing policy on tobacco advertising; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Government continue to keep under review the position on tobacco advertising, against the background of our long-standing policy that the right way to control the advertising and promotion of tobacco products is through the voluntary agreements that we have with the tobacco industry.

"Caring for People"

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health for what reason her Department's advice to local authorities and health authorities on implementing "Caring for People" states that the current broad pattern of funding should be regarded as an implied commitment for 1993-94 by the local authority in respect of new clients requiring residential or nursing home care after April 1993.

Dr. Mawhinney: The funds for such placements will transfer from the Department of Social Security to local authorities. Whether there should be any adjustment to the current pattern of service would be a matter for local decision which should be taken jointly with the relevant health authority. Individual assessment of need will of course determine the exact numbers of people who enter residential or nursing home care after April 1993.

Prescriptions

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health for what proportion of prescriptions for which a prescription charge is paid the cost of the item to the NHS is less than the prescription charge.

Dr. Mawhinney: The proportion in 1991-92 was 29·4 per cent.

Hospitals

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what advice is given to health authorities with regard to public consultation prior to the closure or change of use of individual wards in hospitals where the long-term closure of such hospitals has already been agreed.

Mr. Sackville: The Community Health Council Regulations 1985, as amended, require district health authorities to consult the relevant community health council on proposals which would result in substantial changes to health services in the district. It is for regional and district health authorities to consider when further formal or informal local consultation is necessary during the phased closure of a major institution.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Kenya

36. **Mr. Vaz:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the current level of aid to Kenya.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Our gross bilateral aid programme in 1990—the last year for which figures are available—was £44 million.

Sub-Saharan Africa

37. **Mr. Heppell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will state the Government's response on aid to sub-Saharan Africa.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Sub-Saharan Africa has a high priority in the bilateral aid programme. Gross bilateral aid flows amounted to £367 million in 1990, the latest year for which full figures are available.

Aid

38. **Sir Michael Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proportion of United Kingdom official aid has been untied for purchasing at the discretion of recipient developing countries in each of the last three years.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: British aid is provided for specific purposes. Nearly all the aid we provide through multilateral institutions is untied. The untied proportion of our bilateral aid commitments was 18 per cent. in 1988, 24 per cent. in 1989 and 21 per cent. in 1990.

Tropical Forests

39. **Mr. Etherington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the Government's current policy on overseas aid in respect of tropical forests.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The Government's policy is to help promote the sustainable management of tropical forests and their biodiversity. We have substantially increased our bilateral aid activities to this end and encouraged other donors to do likewise.

Debt Rescheduling

40. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he expects to meet third-world leaders to discuss rescheduling of debt.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: My right hon. and noble Friend the Minister for Overseas Development regularly meets leaders of third world countries. The rescheduling of debt is often discussed. The Prime Minister's 1990 Trinidad terms initiative has so far benefited five countries, and Britain has relieved developing countries of the burden of aid debt worth more than £1,000 million.

East European States

41. **Mr. Jim Cunningham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with east European leaders on the question of aid to east European states.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We are in regular contact with colleagues in central and eastern Europe on all aspects of our bilateral relations, including aid.

Zimbabwe

42. **Ms. Hoey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assistance is being given to help Zimbabwe deal with the current drought.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The Government has provided £7·5 million in balance of payments aid for Zimbabwe, to help relieve the financial burden of food imports, in response to the current crisis.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Freedom of Information

31. **Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Attorney-General what is his policy on freedom of information relating to papers in the possession of the Director of Public Prosecutions or the law officers and under consideration where prosecutions have not been instituted.

The Attorney-General: Papers relating to prosecuting decisions are distinct from Government papers. Their handling must reflect special considerations, such as the need to avoid harm or unfairness to a prospective defendant or to witnesses if the decision is taken not to prosecute.

Hillsborough Inquest

32. **Mr. Wareing:** To ask the Attorney-General what representations he has received in respect of the conduct of the inquest into the Hillsborough disaster; and what has been his response.

The Solicitor-General: My right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General has received various representations. He is at present considering a formal application received on 16 April, for consent under section 13 of the Coroners Act 1988 to enable the relatives of six persons who died at Hillsborough to apply to the High Court for an order quashing the inquisitions in respect of those six persons and directing a fresh inquest.

Extradition

33. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Attorney-General if he will make a statement on his responsibilities in relation to extradition.

The Attorney-General: My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary has responsibility for the law and practice relating to extradition.

I myself conduct certain communications on behalf of the United Kingdom with the Attorney-General of the Republic of Ireland concerning the return of alleged offenders from the republic under the backing of warrants arrangements.

Mr. Anthony Benton

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Attorney-General when it is expected the Director of Public Prosecutions will make a decision over any possible criminal proceedings regarding the conviction of Mr. Anthony Benton of Walsall.

The Attorney-General: The Crown prosecution service has considered whether any criminal proceedings should be brought following complaints regarding the conviction of Mr. Anthony Benton of Walsall. The deputy chief constable of the West Midlands police has been advised that the evidence is insufficient to justify any criminal proceedings against any police officer involved in that case.

Mr. Kurt Klebeck

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Attorney-General if he will make a statement on the proceedings taken by the allies at the end of the last war against Kurt Klebeck; and whether he will discuss with his counterparts in the Channel islands the taking of proceedings against him for Nazi war crimes in the Channel islands.

The Attorney-General: No.

Kurt Klebeck was prosecuted and convicted in 1947 by the British military court in Germany for:

(i) being concerned in the killing of allied nationals, in violation of the laws and usages of war, who were interned in the Hanover/Ahnem concentration camp between November 1944 and April 1945.

(ii) being concerned in the ill-treatment of allied nationals in the same camp and during the same period as (i) above.

He was sentenced to 10 years imprisonment.

The papers relating to the proceedings against Klebeck are open to inspection in the Public Record Office. I understand that he is a German national resident in Germany. The War Crimes Act 1991 is not, therefore, in issue. I further understand that Germany does not extradite its own nationals. The question of his prosecution for offences alleged to have been committed in the Channel Islands is a matter for the German authorities, who have the necessary jurisdiction.

Crown Prosecutors

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Attorney-General if he will publish the code for Crown prosecutors drawn up by the Crown prosecution service.

The Attorney-General: The code for Crown prosecutors is a public document.

In accordance with section 10(3) of the Prosecution of Offences Act 1985, the Director of Public Prosecutions sets out any alterations to the code in the annual report which she makes to me under section 9 of the Act. The annual report is available to the public through HMSO.

The code was re-printed in January 1992, incorporating amendments that have been made since it was first issued in 1986. A copy of the revised edition was placed in the Library of both Houses on 10 March 1992.

EDUCATION

Standard Assessment Tasks

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what proposals he has for scrapping standard assessment tasks for children of seven years of age.

Mr. Forth: None.

City Technology Colleges

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans he has to reduce the amount of business funding for city technology colleges.

Mr. Forth: I have no such plans. Each city technology college represents a funding partnership between Government and private sector sponsors. Sponsors have already contributed some £20 million to the capital costs of CTCs, and are committed to contribute over £10 million more. My Department funds the running costs of CTCs on a basis comparable with that of other secondary schools.

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans he has to increase the number of city technology colleges.

Mr. Forth: Thirteen city technology colleges are now operating. A further college will open in Derby this

September, and another in Bristol the following year. In accordance with our manifesto commitments, the Government will enable the creation of new types of grant-maintained and voluntary-aided schools which will embody the characteristics of CTCs.

WALES

Employment

12. **Mr. Llwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what steps have been taken to increase employment opportunities in the Meirionnydd Nant Conwy constituency; and what plans there are for the immediate future.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The Welsh Office, the Development Board for Rural Wales and other Government agencies operate a wide range of measures aimed at increasing employment opportunities throughout all areas of Wales. The Welsh Office and all the other bodies involved in economic development will continue to look for and respond swiftly to opportunities that arise which have the potential to increase employment prospects in the Meirionnydd Nant Conwy constituency.

Unemployment

13. **Mr. Ray Powell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what are the current unemployment figures for Ogmore, Mid Glamorgan and Wales; and what the figures were in May 1979.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: In March 1992 there were 4,435, 32,551, and 125,871 unemployed claimants in the Ogmore constituency, Mid Glamorgan and Wales. Comparable data for May 1979 for Ogmore and Mid Glamorgan is not available. The comparable number of unemployed claimants in Wales in 1979, seasonally adjusted, was 66,100 and 122,500 in March 1992.

Inward Investment

14. **Mr. Sweeney:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what has been the annual rate of inward investment to Wales for each year since 1974.

Mr. David Hunt: Wales has consistently recorded very high levels of inward investment. 1991 was the best ever year with 183 projects promising more than 17,000 jobs and capital investment in excess of £860 million.

Local Government

15. **Mr. Ron Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he expects to publish his White Paper on local Government reforms.

Mr. David Hunt: Later this year.

Education

16. **Mr. Richards:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what steps he has taken to implement the Further and Higher Education Act 1992; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Commencement orders establishing the Further and Higher Education Councils for Wales came into effect on 6 May. My right hon. Friend has announced the membership of the Higher Education Funding Council and the chairman and chief executive of the Further Education Funding Council. He hopes to be able to announce the members of the Further Education Funding Council shortly.

23. **Mr. Murphy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he next intends to meet leaders of county councils in Wales to discuss educational provision in the Principality.

Sir Wyn Roberts: My right hon. Friend has meetings with leaders of Welsh county councils to discuss matters of mutual concern, which are arranged when needed.

Community Charge

17. **Mr. Ian Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the percentage of total council spending to be raised by the community charge this year in Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: Community charges set by Welsh authorities account for around 11·5 per cent. of their provisional budgeted revenue expenditure for 1992-93. The £40 million that I am providing through the community charge reduction scheme will reduce the proportion to around 10 per cent.

Recession

18. **Mr. Hain:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement about his plans to alleviate the impact of the recession in Neath.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: It is clear that the Government's policy of bearing down on inflation has been successful and that all the essential ingredients for economic recovery are in place. The latest reduction in interest rates will add further impetus to economic recovery and will be of benefit to, and welcomed by, the business community in Neath.

Young Offenders

19. **Dr. Howells:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement about the provision of secure units for young offenders in south Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: I share the urgency for secure establishments to be operational, for I see such as a major agency in combating crime, and I am determined that this will be pressed forward as quickly as possible.

NHS Trusts

20. **Mr. Alan W. Williams:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the latest number of expressions of interest in applying for national health service trust status among hospitals in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The Pembrokeshire NHS trust became operational on 1 April. We announced on 19 December 1991 that 14 health units in Wales had been invited to prepare applications to become NHS trusts in April 1993. These applications are expected shortly and there will be widespread consultation before any decisions are taken.

Elsewhere in Wales, the decision whether to seek NHS trust status is a matter for individual health units, in the light of local circumstances.

Cardiff Royal Infirmary

21. **Mr. Jon Owen Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on his plans for *(a)* the future of Cardiff royal infirmary and *(b)* the future arrangements for accident and emergency services in South Glamorgan.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: These are primarily matters for South Glamorgan health authority. However, I am taking a keen interest and am aware of the uncertainty that exists. I am confident that the current Strategic Review of future intentions by South and Mid Glamorgan DHAs and University of Wales College of Medicine will allow the uncertainty to be removed.

Planning Decisions

22. **Mr. Martyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what recent representations he has received relating to planning decisions *(a)* in Clwyd, South-West and *(b)* Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: My right hon. Friend frequently receives representations on a range of planning matters throughout Wales.

Environment

24. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what are the environmental priorities for his Department during the last six months of 1992.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: My right hon. Friends and I intend to pursue the environmental policies set out in the manifesto, "The Best Future for Wales". Attention will focus on land reclamation and housing improvement programmes, together with a wide range of agricultural, transport, planning, pollution control and other measures designed to protect and enhance the environment in Wales.

Pembrokeshire

25. **Mr. Dafis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what measures are currently being taken to respond to the economic difficulties of north Pembrokeshire, resulting from the proposed closure of Royal navy armaments depot, Trecwn.

26. **Mr. Ainger:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what measures he is taking to relieve unemployment in the Pembroke constituency.

Mr. David Hunt: I established the west Wales task force and a strategy group, which I chair, in January. Since then I have announced the allocation of £4·7 million for a range of projects which will develop the industrial and economic infrastructure of west Wales. The task force has commissioned consultants to draw up a five year economic development plan for the area and this report, to which I will give urgent and careful consideration, will be available in the summer.

Toxic Waste

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what volumes of toxic waste have been imported into Wales each year since 1979; and what has been done with those wastes.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Information on the importation of hazardous waste into the United Kingdom is available only for the period since the introduction of the Transfrontier Shipment of Hazardous Waste Regulations in October 1988.

The information is given in the table:

Imports of hazardous waste

	October 1988 to 1 March 1989	*1 April 1989 to 31 March 1990*	*1 April 1990 to 31 March 1991*	[1]*1 April 1991 to 31 March 1992*
(1) via Welsh and English ports for disposal in Wales	5,547·3	6,693·9	6,881·5	4,933·0
(2) via Welsh ports for disposal in				
(i) Wales	—	754·9	585·3	459·8
(ii) England	43·0	733·5	4,758·0	6,824·8

[1] Subject to validation.

Note: The waste is consigned to licensed waste disposal facilities.

Wind Energy

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if his Department was represented at the conference on wind energy opportunities in Wales, organised by the National Farmers Union in Aberystwyth on 7 April.

Mr. David Hunt: No.

Forestry

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the implications for forestry in Wales of *(a)* the new Forestry Authority and *(b)* Forestry Enterprise.

Mr. David Hunt: The internal reorganisation of the Forestry Commission which was implemented on 1 April 1992 makes a clear distinction between its regulatory and advisory functions (as the Forestry Authority) and its forest management role (as Forest Enterprise). This has strengthened the commission's ability to lead the way in implementing forestry policy in Wales and improved its efficiency and effectiveness in managing its forest estate.

Environment Week

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what contribution is to be made by his Department to the environment week, 16 to 24 May, sponsored by the Civic Trust.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The Department has not received an invitation to participate directly in environment week. It does, however, provide grant aid for the work of the Civic Trust for Wales, which is participating.

Local Government Reorganisation

Mr. Roger Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the timetable for his proposals for local government reorganisation and in particular the restoration of Monmouthshire.

Mr. David Hunt: I will be publishing a White Paper later this year. Legislation will follow. I intend that the new shadow authorities should be in place from 1 April 1994 and fully operational/functional for 1 April 1995. The proposal for a separate council for Monmouth featured in my statement of 3 March on which I have invited views.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Members' Allowances

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Lord President of the Council when he expects to publish the Top Salaries Review Body's report on hon. Members' secretarial allowances.

Mr. Newton: I hope to be able to inform the House soon about our plans for publication.

EMPLOYMENT

Investors in People

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many companies have been awarded the Investors in People kitemark; and what percentage this represents of the companies eligible.

Mr. McLoughlin: By 7 May 1992, 50 organisations have been recognised as Investors in People. This achievement reflects the demanding nature of the national standard. This is a small percentage in these early days of the initiative as it is open to all employing organisations to commit themselves to work towards achieving the standard.

Youth Training

Mr. Simpson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many young people are currently unable to take up a guaranteed training place by reason of such a place not being available.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many young people have not received an offer of a guaranteed place on youth training.

Mr. McLoughlin: The information is not available in the form requested. The YT guarantee remains a key objective, and sufficient resources will be available to ensure that an offer of a suitable YT training place is made to all 16 and 17-year-olds not in work or full-time education who are seeking entry.

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the estimated average employer's contribution to each filled youth training place per annum in 1992-93.

Mr. McLoughlin: No reliable estimate is available. For management purposes, the asumption is that on average about a quarter of the total cost of providing youth training is meet by employer contributions.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many persons aged 16 and 17 years have been refused a place on youth training schemes in (i) 1989, (ii) 1990, (iii) 1991 and (iv) at the latest available date.

Mr. McLoughlin: The information is not available in the form requested.

Unit Labour Costs

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what has been the movement of unit labour costs in the United Kingdom and Germany since October 1990.

Mr. McLoughlin: Between October 1990 and December 1991 unit wage and salary costs in manufacturing in the United Kingdom rose by 6·6 per cent. compared with an increase in the former Federal Republic of Germany over the same period of 11·0 per cent.

Unemployment Benefit (Disqualification)

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many unemployed people were disqualified for unemployment benefit under each paragraph of section 20(1) of the Social Security Act 1975 in the area covered by the Newport, Gwent, unemployment benefit office, in the latest month for which information can be obtained from the office; in how many cases disqualification was imposed for the maximum period of 26 weeks; and what is the estimated cost of obtaining this information.

Mr. McLoughlin: Questions on operational matters in the Employment Service Executive Agency are the responsibility of the agency's chief executive, to whom I have referred this question for reply.

Unemployment

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give the figures for the change in unemployment each month since January 1987.

Mr. McLoughlin: The information requested can be obtained from the NOMIS database in the Library.

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

Non-stipendiary Priests

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, as representing the Church Commissioners how many non-stipendiary priests are currently licensed for parish work.

Mr. Alison: The records held by the Commissioners for Crockford's Clerical Directory list 2,159 deacons and priests who are not paid by the Commissioners but who are licensed to, or have permission to officiate, or are otherwise listed as non-stipendiary ministers. Of these 501 also hold other appointments such as school chaplains.

SCOTLAND

Asbestosis

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects to reach a decision in relation to legislation on deferred damages for victims of asbestosis as proposed by the Scottish Law Commission; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. Friend has welcomed and accepted the recommendations made by the Scottish Law Commission in its Report on the Effect of Death on Damages (Scottish Law Commission No. 134). We hope that it will prove possible for a private Member to bring forward a Bill to give effect to the Commission's recommendations early in the current Parliament.

Housing

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish in the *Official Report* a list in descending order of the average rents of local housing authorities in Scotland for 1991-92 and for 1992-93; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested is shown in the table. Average council house rents are expected to have increased by 7·0 per cent. from £23·14 per house per week in 1991-92 to £24·75 in 1992-93.

I have placed in the Library a more detailed analysis of local authority housing revenue account income and expenditure outturns for 1991-92 and budget forecasts for 1992-93. This shows the wide variations which exist between local authorities in, for example, the level of council rents, expenditure on loan charges, and expenditure on management and maintenance of their housing stock.

Average rents (£ per house per week)

		1991-92
	Scotland	23·14
1	Edinburgh	28·88
2	Dundee	28·40
3[2]	Western Isles	28·31
4[2]	Clydebank	26·93
5[2]	Glasgow	26·78
6	Dumbarton	25·95
7[2]	Orkney Islands	25·60
8[2]	Ross and Cromarty	25·10
9[2]	Stewartry	24·65
10[2]	Bearsden and Milngavie	24·53
11[2]	Skye and Lochalsh	24·51
12[2]	Annandale and Eskdale	24·14
13[2]	Shetland Islands	24·12
14[2]	Inverness	24·08
15[2]	Nairn	24·04
16[2]	Roxburgh	23·94
17[2]	Wigtown	23·60
18[2]	Lochaber	23·59
19[2]	Sutherland	23·43
20[2]	Argyll and Bute	23·43
21	Stirling	23·26
22[2]	Gordon	23·24
23	Clackmannan	23·19
24	Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	23·16
25	East Kilbride	23·11
26	North East Fife	22·89
27	Kirkcaldy	22·63
28	Monklands	22·58
29[2]	Caithness	22·20
30	East Lothian	21·95
31	Inverclyde	21·77
32	Hamilton	21·63
33	Strathkelvin	21·58
34	Banff and Buchan	21·26
35	Nithsdale	21·23
36	Dunfermline	21·21
37	Berwickshire	21·00
38	Moray	20·94
39	Aberdeen	20·76
40	Clydesdale	20·68
41	Renfrew	20·47
42	Cumnock and Doon Valley	20·32
43	Kyle and Carrick	20·31
44	Cunninghame	20·27
45	Falkirk	20·02
46	Perth and Kinross	20·01
47	Motherwell	19·72
48	Kilmarnock and Loudoun	19·31
49	West Lothian	19·03
50	Ettrick and Lauderdale	18·84
51[2]	Badenoch and Strathspey	18·81
52[2]	Kincardine and Deeside	18·77
53	Angus	17·90
54	Tweeddale	17·87
55	Eastwood	17·86
56	Midlothian	15·92

Average rents (£ per house per week)

		1992-93
1[1]	Scotland	24·75
1[1]	Western Isles	30·63
2	Edinburgh	30·63
3	Dundee	30·43
4[1]	Glasgow	29·02
5[1]	Skye and Lochalsh	28·92
6[1]	Ross and Cromarty	28·53
7	Dumbarton	27·94
8[1]	Shetland Islands	27·81
9[1]	Bearsden and Milngavie	27·58
10[1]	Orkney Islands	27·45
11[1]	Sutherland	27·42
12[1]	Inverness	27·37
13[1]	Wigtown	27·33
14[1]	Stewartry	27·00
15[1]	Nairn	26·99
16[1]	Clydebank	26·77
17[1]	Argyll and Bute	26·45
18[1]	Roxburgh	26·27
19[1]	Lochaber	26·14
20[1]	Annandale and Eskdale	25·97
21[1]	Gordon	25·33
22	Stirling	25·10
23[1]	Caithness	24·72
24	Clackmannan	24·69
25	Kirkcaldy	24·63
26	Inverclyde	24·25
27	Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	24·15
28	Monklands	24·11
29	Nithsdale	23·72
30	East Kilbride	23·70
31	Hamilton	23·70
32	North East Fife	23·21
33	Strathkelvin	23·14
34	Moray	22·86
35	Dunfermline	22·84
36	Cumnock and Doon Valley	22·61
37	Berwickshire	22·46
38	Renfrew	22·44
39	East Lothian	22·35
40[1]	Badenoch and Strathspey	22·31
41	Banff and Buchan	22·17
42	Cunninghame	22·05
43	Perth and Kinross	21·94
44[1]	Kincardine and Deeside	21·84
45	Clydesdale	21·82

		1992-93
46	Falkirk	21·21
47	Motherwell	21·09
48	Eastwood	20·97
49	Aberdeen	20·65
50	Kyle and Carrick	20·46
51	West Lothian	19·82
52	Tweeddale	19·75
53	Ettrick and Lauderdale	19·51
54	Kilmarnock and Loudoun	19·38
55	Angus	17·90
56	Midlothian	16·21

SOCIAL SECURITY

Benefits

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security by how much expenditure on supplementary benefit and income support has been reduced in each year as a result of the restriction of mortgage interest payments to 50 per cent. for the first 16 weeks of a claim.

Mr. Burt: The information is as follows:

Annual amount of mortgage interest not included in assessments due to the restriction to 50 per cent.

Year	£ millions
1988	33
1989	34
1990	71

Notes:

1. Figures have been rounded to the nearest million.
2. Annual amount for each year has been derived by multiplying the average weekly figure for a week in May by 52.
3. The figures do not take account of changes in interest rates and case loads, among other variables, during the year.

Benefits Statistics

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he will reissue the table published in the *Official Report* of 13 February 1992, columns *607*, showing the combined value of child benefit and child dependency increases for widows and invalidity pensioners, with amended headings showing the meaning of each column of figures; and whether he will publish a similar table showing the combined value of child benefit and war widows' children's allowances.

Mr. Burt: The tables are as follows:

National insurance widows and invalidity pensioners

A	B	C	D		E			
Uprating date	*Rate of child benefit plus child dependency increase*	*Equivalent value of column B amounts at April 1991 prices*	*Gross male weekly average earnings, with amounts in column B as percentage*		*Equivalent weekly earnings net of income tax and national insurance contributions, with amounts in column B as percentage*			
					Single person		*Married couple*	
	(£)	*(£)*	*(£)*	*(per cent.)*	*(£)*	*(per cent.)*	*(£)*	*(per cent.)*
November 1979	11·10	24·52	114·10	9·7	79·90	13·9	83·60	13·3
November 1980	12·25	23·47	135·10	9·1	93·40	13·1	97·80	12·5
November 1981	12·95	22·16	149·50	8·7	101·00	12·8	105·40	12·3
November 1982	13·80	22·22	160·60	8·6	107·40	12·8	112·50	12·3
November 1983	14·10	21·65	172·40	8·2	115·50	12·2	121·30	11·6
November 1984	14·50	21·22	187·40	7·7	125·90	11·5	132·50	10·9
November 1985	15·05	20·88	199·50	7·5	134·40	11·2	141·60	10·6
July 1986	15·15	20·68	210·90	7·2	143·80	10·5	151·20	10·0
April 1987	15·30	20·00	224·00	6·8	155·90	9·8	163·00	9·4
April 1988	15·65	19·69	245·80	6·4	174·80	9·0	182·00	8·6
April 1989	16·20	18·86	269·50	6·0	191·30	8·5	198·90	8·1
April 1990	16·90	17·98	295·60	5·7	212·80	7·9	221·10	7·6
April 1991	[1]17·95	17·95	318·90	5·6	230·00	7·8	238·30	7·5

[1] Where the new higher rate of child benefit for the eldest qualifying child applied, the child dependency increase was adjusted so that the total level of support remained the same for all children.

War widows

A	B	C	D		E			
Uprating date	*Rate of child benefit plus war widow's child's allowance*	*Equivalent value of column B amounts at April 1991 prices*	*Gross male weekly average earnings, with amounts in column B as percentage*		*Equivalent weekly earnings net of income tax and national insurance contributions, with amounts in column B as a percentage*			
					Single person		*Married couple*	
	(£)	*(£)*	*(£)*	*(per cent.)*	*(£)*	*(per cent.)*	*(£)*	*(per cent.)*
November 1979	14·00	30·93	114·10	12·3	79·90	17·5	83·60	16·7
November 1980	15·35	29·41	135·10	11·4	93·40	16·4	97·80	15·7
November 1981	16·10	27·55	149·50	10·8	101·00	15·9	105·40	15·3
November 1982	17·10	27·53	160·60	10·6	107·40	15·9	112·50	15·2
November 1983	17·45	26·80	172·40	10·1	115·50	15·1	121·30	14·4
November 1984	17·90	26·20	187·40	9·6	125·90	14·2	132·50	13·5
November 1985	18·55	25·74	199·50	9·3	134·40	13·8	141·60	13·1
July 1986	18·65	25·46	210·90	8·8	143·80	13·0	151·20	12·3
April 1987	18·85	24·65	224·00	8·4	155·90	12·1	163·00	11·6
April 1988	19·25	24·22	245·80	7·8	174·80	11·0	182·00	10·6
April 1989	19·85	23·11	269·50	7·4	191·30	10·4	198·90	10·0
April 1990	20·65	21·97	295·60	7·0	212·80	9·7	221·10	9·3
April 1991	[1]21·90	21·90	318·90	6·9	230·00	9·5	238·30	9·2

[1] Where the new higher rate of child benefit for the eldest qualifying child applied, the war widow's child's allowance was adjusted so that the total level of support remained the same for all children.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proportion and how many supplementary benefit income support claims from couples are made by women each year.

Mr. Burt: There is no information on the proportion of claims from couples made by women.

Of those actually receiving income support, there are about 35,000 couples in which the woman is the claimant. This is approximately 5 per cent. of the total.

Source: Income Support Annual Statistical Enquiry May 1990.

Young People

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many 16 and 17-year-olds who failed to gain a place on a YTS scheme *(a)* applied for additional benefits and severe hardship payments and *(b)* what percentage were successful in such applications in (i) 1988, (ii) 1989, (iii) 1990 and (iv) 1991.

Mr. Burt: The Government guarantee the offer of a place on youth training (YT) to all 16 and 17-year-olds who seek one. The safety net of income support caters for those who are at risk of severe hardship whilst seeking an initial YT place or for those between YT places.

No information is available with regard to 16 and 17-year-olds seeking a YT place who claim benefits other than income support. Information about the number of people claiming income support under the severe hardship provision was not kept before 1990. The number of people claiming in 1990 was 14,106 and in 1991 was 25,541. Of these 61 per cent. and 71 per cent. respectively were successful.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he has received a copy of the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux report entitled "Severe Hardship CAB Evidence on Young People and Benefits"; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Burt: We have received the report and are studying the recommendations closely.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what response he has made to the recommendations of the Social Security Advisory Committee regarding benefits for young people.

Mr. Burt: We have received the report from the committee and are studying closely the recommendations that they have made on young people and other matters.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will restore the full rate of income support for young people under 25 years living away from home.

Mr. Burt: We have no plans to change the existing legislation.

Maxwell Pension Schemes

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will use discretionary powers given under the Social Security Act 1990, to ensure that the debt owed to the Maxwell pension schemes is treated as a preferential debt for the purposes of the Insolvency Act 1986.

Miss Widdecombe: Schedule 4 to the Social Security Act 1990 introduced the employer debt provision for occupational pension schemes. There is no discretionary power to treat the debt as preferential for the purposes of the Insolvency Act 1986.

Occupational Pensions

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when the level of occupational pension above which unemployment benefit is reduced was last increased; what would be the present limit if it had been increased in line with average earnings; and what is his policy regarding future increases in the limit.

Mr. Burt: The £35 per week limit was introduced in April 1981 and has remained at that level. If it had been increased in line with average earnings the present limit would be £84 per week. Increasing the limit would not represent the best use of resources for those who have a measure of support through an occupational or personal pension and we have no plans to do so.

Loans and Grants

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the percentages of *(a)* budgeting loans and *(b)* community care grants which were awarded to each of the 15 client groups defined by his Department for (i) the Leeds, West area and (ii) nationally, for the financial years 1989-90 and 1990-91.

Mr. Scott: The information requested is as follows:

Percentage of Community Care Grants awarded to client groups

Client group	*National 1989-90*	*Leeds West 1989-90*	*National 1990-91*	*Leeds West 1990-91*
Over 80 with higher pensioner premium	5·4	2·5	5·5	3·9
60-79, disabled, higher pensioner premium	5·1	2·0	7·0	3·7
60-79, ordinary pensioner premium or over 60 without pensioner premium	15·1	7·4	14·4	8·6
Lone parent with disability premium	0·1	0·5	1·0	0·2
Family with disability premium	3·3	2·3	3·8	2·7
Others with disability premium	2·6	7·6	13·0	8·1
Lone parent without disability premium	25·4	35·3	25·9	45·5
Unemployed, signing quarterly with family premium	0·4	0·0	0·3	0·0
Unemployed, signing quarterly without family premium	1·1	1·0	0·7	0·5
Unemployed or with training allowance with family premium	8·5	6·6	8·1	5·2
Unemployed or with training allowance without family premium	12·8	23·6	11·8	16·2
Others with family premium	2·1	1·8	2·2	1·7
Others without family premium	5·9	6·4	5·6	3·2

Client group	National 1989-90	Leeds West 1989-90	National 1990-91	Leeds West 1990-91
No income support in payment, involved in a trade dispute	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0
Not in receipt of income support	1·0	2·5	0·4	0·5

Note: Due to rounding the sum of the percentages in the above tables may not add up to 100.

Percentage of budgeting loans awarded to client groups

Client Group	National 1989-90	Leeds West 1989-90	National 1990-91	Leeds West 1990-91
Over 80 with higher pensioner premium	0·4	0·8	0·1	0·1
60-79, disabled, higher pensioner premium	0·6	1·1	0·8	1·5
60-79, ordinary pensioner premium or over 60 without pensioner premium	3·5	5·4	3·4	4·8
Lone parent with disability premium	0·4	0·4	0·5	0·2
Family with disability premium	1·6	1·3	1·8	1·5
Others with disability premium	4·2	4·8	4·5	5·1
Lone parent without disability premium	48·6	49·9	51·0	51·7
Unemployed, signing quarterly with family premium	0·4	0·5	0·3	0·5
Unemployed, signing quarterly without family premium	1·8	1·8	1·3	1·7
Unemployed or with training allowance with family premium	15·7	14·4	14·6	15·3
Unemployed or with training allowance without family premium	18·4	16·0	17·6	13·9
Others with family premium	1·1	1·6	1·2	1·1
Others without family premium	3·0	2·0	2·6	2·6
No income support in payment, involved in a trade dispute.	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0
Not in receipt of income support	0·2	0·1	0·1	0·0

Note:
Due to rounding the sum of the percentages in the above tables may not add up to 100.

Statutory Sick Pay

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what rate of statutory sick pay was payable to a person previously earning *(a)* half average earnings, *(b)* average earnings and *(c)* one and a half times average earnings, in cash terms and as a percentage of their earnings, in each year since statutory sick pay commenced.

Mr. Scott: The information requested is as follows:

Date	Average earnings[1]	Statutory sick pay[2] payable on average earnings of			Statutory sick pay as a percentage of earnings of		
		(a) 50 per cent.	(b) 100 per cent.	(c) 150 per cent.	(a) 50 per cent.	(b) 100 per cent.	(c) 150 per cent.
April 1983	£147·40	£40·25	£40·25	£40·25	54·6	27·3	18·2
April 1984	£159·30	£42·25	£42·25	£42·25	53·0	26·5	17·7
April 1985	£171·00	£44·35	£44·35	£44·35	51·9	25·9	17·3
April 1986	£184·70	£46·75	£46·75	£46·75	50·6	25·3	16·9
April 1987	£198·90	£47·20	£47·20	£47·20	47·5	23·7	15·8
April 1988	£218·40	£49·20	£49·20	£49·20	45·1	22·5	15·0
April 1989	£239·70	£52·10	£52·10	£52·10	43·5	21·7	14·5
April 1990	£263·10	£52·50	£52·50	£52·50	39·9	20·0	13·3
April 1991	£284·70	£43·50	£52·50	£52·50	30·6	18·4	12·3

Notes:
[1] Earnings shown are the average for all full-time adult employees. Figures for average earnings from April 1992 are not yet available.
[2] The majority of SSP recipients get occupational sick pay in addition to SSP when they are sick. In many cases this brings the total payment received up to full pay.

Social Fund

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he is intending to bring forward amending regulations in light of the Social Security Advisory Committee's report on "The Social Fund and New Structure"; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: In considering the conclusions and recommendations of this report, we shall also wish to take into account the findings of the university of York social policy research unit's report which we commissioned at the start of the social fund. We have now received that report and it will be published in due course.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what advice has been issued to area social fund officers in the past year to assist them in drafting their guidance to other social fund officers.

Mr. Scott: I refer the hon. Member to my letter of 10 March 1992 to him, a copy of which has been placed in the Library.

EC Pension Age

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the state pension age for men and women in each EC country.

Miss Widdecombe: The information is as follows:

Country	*Men*	*Women*
Belgium[1]	FPA	60-65
Denmark	67	67
France	60	60
Germany[2]	63	60
Greece	65	60
Republic of Ireland[3]	65/66	65/66
Italy	60	55
Luxembourg	65	65
Netherlands	65	65
Portugal	65	62
Spain	65	65
United Kingdom	65	60

Notes:
FPA—Flexible pension age.
[1] Different contribution conditions apply to men and women.
[2] State pension age is 65, but because of early retirement provisions the effective ages are 63 for men and 60 for women. Pension ages will be raised gradually from 2001 until fully equalised at 65 by 2012.
[3] Retirement pension 65, old age pension 66.

Rent Subsidy

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on the implications for the family budget of the families eligible for income support of the cuts in subsidy to rents introduced on 6 April.

Mr. Burt: We are not aware of any significant changes being introduced from 6 April this year in the subsidy paid to local authorities towards housing benefit expenditure.

DEFENCE

Royal Naval Spare Parts Distribution Centre, Eaglescliffe

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what specific information has come to light since assurances about the future of royal naval spare parts distribution centre, Eaglescliffe were given to the hon. Member for Stockton, South in early 1991 that jobs on the site were safe;

(2) if he will make a statement about the future of RNSPD at Eaglescliffe;

(3) what studies have been commissioned about the future of RNSPD Eaglescliffe; and what factors have been set for consideration by *(a)* Ministers and *(b)* officials.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Ministry of Defence is conducting a comprehensive examination of its support activities in order to match reductions in the front line. As part of the examination, we are considering whether a more cost-effective operation could be achieved by the introduction of market testing at certain establishments, including RNSPD Eaglescliffe. We are also examining the possible transfer of some headquarters staff at Eaglescliffe to the Bath area, in accordance with our plans to establish a naval support command, but no decision has yet been taken. I have written to my hon. Friend with details of the work in hand.

HMS Vanguard

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the cost of the naming ceremony for the Trident nuclear submarine HMS Vanguard in Barrow on 30 April.

Mr. Aitken: The full cost of the naming ceremony for HMS Vanguard is a matter for the shipbuilder, Vickers Shipbuilding and Engineering Ltd. In accordance with the established practice, the Ministry of Defence made a contribution towards the April 30 ceremony's cost. This will not exceed £45,000.

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he has had any discussions with his French counterpart over the use in emergencies of the channel tunnel to transport missiles, missile launchers or other military equipment.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My right hon. and learned Friend has had no such discussions. Officials of my Department meet biannually with their French counterparts, however, to discuss arrangements for resupply and reinforcement in times of crisis, including the possible use of the channel tunnel.

Komsomolet Submarine

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make it his policy to have urgent discussions with his Norwegian and Russian counterparts over methods safely to remove the nuclear materials from the Komsomolet nuclear submarine of the former Soviet navy that sank off Norway in 1989.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The recovery of nuclear materials from the Russian submarine Komsomolet is a matter for the Russian Government. We would be willing to consider requests for advice from the Russian and Norwegian Governments concerning the future of the submarine.

Radioactive Waste, Wales

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what sites in Wales contain radioactive wastes arising from *(a)* the production cycle for nuclear warheads and *(b)* the operation of nuclear-powered submarines.

Mr. Aitken: Small amounts of low-level radioactive waste are stored temporarily at the atomic weapons establishment, Cardiff. No sites in Wales hold waste from the operation of nuclear powered submarines.

HMS Turbulent

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the cause, effect and cost of the fire on the Trafalgar class nuclear submarine HMS Turbulent in Devonport dockyard on 30 April; and whether there are any implications arising from the fire for the future designation of Z-berths for nuclear-powered submarines.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The fire occurred in the electrical switchboard of HMS Turbulent. The precise cause, the full extent of the damage and the costs of repair are still being

assessed. Twenty-four personnel were treated for the effects of smoke inhalation. There were no other casualties. The fire posed no threat to the submarine's nuclear reactor. There are no implications for the future designation of Z-berths.

Nuclear Submarines (Health Risks)

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the radiological risks posed to people living in Scotland by the presence of nuclear-powered and nuclear-armed submarines on the Clyde and Forth estuaries.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: All Royal Navy nuclear powered submarines are operated to stringent safety criteria. As is made clear in the latest issue of "Marine Environment Radioactivity Surveys at Nuclear Submarine Berths in the UK", published by HMSO and covering the surveys undertaken in 1990—a copy of which is in the House of Commons Library—there has been no radiological hazard to any member of the general public from the operation of nuclear-powered submarines.

It has of course been the policy of successive Governments neither to confirm nor deny the presence of nuclear weapons at specific locations or times. I can, however, state that there has never been an accident involving a United Kingdom nuclear weapon that has resulted in any radiological hazard to the public.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 12 May 1992

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Maastricht Treaty

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the increases in the powers of the European Parliament embodied in the treaty of European unity signed at Maastricht and specify the consequential restrictions on the powers of *(a)* the Commission, *(b)* the Council of Ministers and *(c)* national parliaments.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The treaty on European union increases the role of the European Parliament in a range of ways, both legislative and non-legislative. In some cases these are new. In others, they are extensions of existing procedures to new articles.

All of these provisions are clearly set out in the treaty on European union. Together they represent no basic change in the existing institutional structure. The Parliament will have greater powers to scrutinise the Commission, but the Council of Ministers will remain the ultimate decision-making body in the Community and its members will remain accountable to their national parliaments.

European Movement

Sir Russell Johnston: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs which European Community Governments make state contributions to the European Movement in their countries; and if he will list these and the amounts.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Government phased out direct funding to the British council of the European Movement in 1985. Where possible, we continue to support its work through other means. We have no information about Government funding to the European Movement in other Community member states.

Visas (Poles)

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many students studying English at Polish universities were refused visas to visit the United Kingdom in the past 12 months; and what reason there was for each refusal.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: A total of 44,684 visas were issued at Warsaw in 1991; 2,642 applications were refused. Of those applications refused, 1,269 were from persons under 25 requesting a visa for a single entry into the United Kingdom. Statistics are not readily available to provide the further information requested.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the current average waiting time for Polish citizens waiting at the British consulate for interview on their application for a visa for admission to the United Kingdom.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Provided that all supporting documentary evidence is available, a personal applicant for an entry clearance at Warsaw would currently be interviewed, if necessary, on the same day as the embassy receives the application.

Subsidiarity

Mr. Shore: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what competences, in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity, Mr. Delors, on behalf of the European Commission, has announced that he is ready to renounce.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Mr. Delors has made no such announcement. However the Commission's work programme for 1992 stressed the importance of the principle of subsidiarity.

Colonial Governors

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the annual leave entitlement of each of the governors of the remaining colonies; how many home leave journeys are allowed each year; and what is the annual cost.

Mr. Goodlad: Those governors on diplomatic service terms are entitled to 42 days annual leave plus 14 days local leave, which must be taken at post. The governors of Montserrat, St. Helena and Turks and Caicos are entitled to 35 days plus seven days local leave. Entitlements to leave passages to the United Kingdom, and current costs, including costs for spouses, are as follows:

	£
Anguilla:	
Mid-tour leave after 18 months	3,190
One recreational journey in three complete years of service	1,528
BVI:	
Mid-tour leave after 18 months	1,601
One recreational journey in three years	690
Falkland Islands:	
Mid-tour leave after one year	RAF
One recreational journey in three years	flights
Montserrat:	
Mid-tour leave after one year	1,610
One recreational journey in three years	784
St. Helena:	
Mid-tour leave after one year	5,108
One recreational journey in three years	3,150
Turks and Caicos:	
Mid-tour leave after one year	5,128
One recreational journey in three years	1,068

Average costs over one year are £11,901.

Leave entitlements and passages for governors of Bermuda, Cayman Islands and Hong Kong are met by their respective Governments.

Leave entitlement and the cost of passages for the governor of Gibraltar are the responsibility of the Ministry of Defence.

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the annual cost of running the official residencies of each of the governors of the remaining colonies.

Mr. Goodlad: Of the 15 dependent territories there are resident governors in only ten. The upkeep of their residences is the responsibility of each territory's Government, but the Foreign and Commonwealth Office does on occasions assist with these expenditures. As a result, the overseas estate department of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office has, during the 1991-92 financial year, financed running costs in three of these: Anguilla —£30,000; Grand Turk—£6,000; and Montserrat—£40,000.

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list *(a)* the current salary and *(b)* the proposed salary for the next financial year for the governors of the remaining British colonies.

Mr. Goodlad: The governors of Anguilla and the British Virgin Islands are diplomatic service grade 4 officers—salary scale £37,928 to £42,870. The governor of the Falkland Islands is a senior grade diplomatic service officer—salary point 5, £51,300. The governors of Montserrat, St. Helena and Turks and Caicos are paid a partial salary by their respective Governments and their salary is "topped up", to the mean of the DS4 scale—£40,399—by Her Majesty's Government. Current topping up costs are £13,368, £14,040, and £22,860 respectively. The governors of Bermuda, Cayman Islands and Hong Kong are paid entirely by their respective Governments and there are no salary costs falling to Her Majesty's Government. The governors/commissioners of the British Antarctic Territory, British Indian Ocean Territory, Pitcairn Henderson Ducie and Oeno Islands, and South Georgia and South Sandwich Islands are non-resident and there are no direct salary costs. The governor of Gibraltar is paid by the Ministry of Defence.

Salary costs for the next financial year are dependent on salary increase settlements for the civil service, which will be negotiated in due course.

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what official travelling arrangements by means of ship, plane or car are provided for each of the governors of the remaining colonies; and what is the annual cost for each governorship.

Mr. Goodlad: Her Majesty's Government provide the following:

Place	*Transport*	*Cost*
Falkland Islands:	Land-Rover	£16,000
Turks and Caicos Islands:	Taxi	£15,700
Montserrat:	Range Rover	£21,500
Anguilla:	Range Rover	£24,400

Other costs are met by the Governments of the respective dependent territories.

Commonwealth of Independent States

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if it is Her Majesty's Government's policy to support the call by European Community Commissioner Ripa di Meana that European Community financial and technical assistance to the Commonwealth of Independent States should be dependent on the shut-down of certain nuclear reactors.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Her Majesty's Government strongly support international efforts to improve the safety of nuclear power installation in eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States. We recognise, however, that the unconditional closure of nuclear power stations is not a feasible option until practical alternative supplies of energy exist.

ENVIRONMENT

United Nations Conference on Environment and Development

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to announce the names of Her Majesty's Government's delegates to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: The Prime Minister has already announced his intention to attend part of the Earth summit. I also propose to attend part of the summit, as do my hon. Friends the Under-Secretary of State responsible for overseas development and the Minister for the Environment and Countryside. Officials from the Departments most closely involved will also be included in the delegation. Her Majesty's Government have offered around 12 places as observers on the delegation to environment and development groups, local government, business and trade unions, the scientific community and youth.

Housing Associations

Dr. Spink: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the level of new home completions by housing associations in 1991-92; and what is the expected level for 1992-93.

Mr. Baldry: In 1991-92, the Housing Corporation's approved development programme produced an estimated 27,100 housing association homes available for occupation —2,000 more than its original target. Final figures are expected towards the end of May. The corporation's target for 1992-93 is 43,400 homes.

Rents-to-mortgages Scheme

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many council tenants he expects to convert rents into mortgages during the coming year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: Rents to mortgages—RTM—will provide a valuable new low-risk route into owner-occupation, by allowing tenants to use the money they would otherwise have paid as rent to service a mortgage which gives them a stake in their own homes. At present the English pilot scheme for RTM is available only to new town tenants in Basildon, but we will legislate to extend it to local authority tenants.

London Borough Boundaries

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list all the reports published by the Local Government Boundary Commission regarding the boundaries of London boroughs including the dates of publication of first and further draft proposals, the dates by which comments were to be received and the dates of publication of final reports.

Mr. Robin Squire: The information is set out in the table.

Timetables of published local government boundary commission reports on the London boroughs

Published reports	*Report number*	*Date of first draft proposals*	*Date by which comments were to be received*	*Date of further draft proposals*	*Date by which comments were to be received*	*Date of publication of final report*
Barnet—boundaries with Harrow and Hertsmere	594	11 July 1988	12 September 1988	—	—	25 January 1991
Bexley—boundaries with Barking and Dagenham, Thurrock and Dartford	598	11 July 1988	12 September 1988	—	—	28 February 1991
Bromley—boundaries with Bexley, Tandridge, Sevenoaks and part of Bexley's boundary with Dartford	620	29 May 1989	24 July 1989	20 March 1991	15 May 1991	26 February 1992
City of London—boundaries with City of Westminster, Camden, Hackney, Islington, Lambeth, Southwark and Tower Hamlets	636	5 March 1990	1 May 1990	17 May 1991	12 July 1991	23 April 1992
Croydon—boundaries with Bromley, Reigate and Banstead and Tandridge	615	23 January 1989	20 March 1989	20 March 1991	15 May 1991	22 November 1991
Croydon—boundary with Lambeth	623	21 June 1991	16 August 1991	—	—	12 February 1992
Crystal Palace Area—boundaries of Bromley, Croydon, Lambeth, Lewisham and Southwark	632	19 August 1991	14 October 1991	—	—	22 April 1992
Greenwich—boundaries with Barking and Dagenham, Bexley, Newham and Tower Hamlets	622	1 October 1990	10 December 1990	2 August 1991	27 September 1991	31 January 1992
Harrow—boundaries with Ealing, Hillingdon, Hertsmere and Three Rivers	610	23 October 1989	18 December 1989	—	—	4 October 1991
Islington—boundaries with Camden, Hackney and Haringey	638	11 June 1990	6 August 1990	15 May 1991	12 June 1991	22 April 1992
Lambeth—boundary with Southwark	624	30 April 1991	25 June 1991	—	—	19 February 1992
Southwark—boundaries with Lewisham and Tower Hamlets	637	20 March 1991	15 May 1991	4 December 1991	12 February 1992	29 April 1992
Tower Hamlets—boundary with Hackney	634	12 April 1991	7 June 1991	—	—	13 April 1992
Waltham Forest—boundaries with Enfield, Hackney, Haringey and Epping Forest and part of Enfield's boundary with Epping Forest	618	19 September 1988	14 November 1988	26 April 1991	21 June 1991	28 Februarry 1992

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to make orders implementing the various final reports of the Local Government Boundary Commission into the boundaries of London boroughs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robin Squire: The first order is expected to be made by the end of June; others where the proposals have been accepted should have orders made later this year.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects the Local Government Boundary Commission to have completed its examination of the boundaries of all London boroughs.

Mr. Robin Squire: By 31 October 1992.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if there are any proposed boundary changes in London for which the Local Government Boundary Commission has yet to issue first draft proposals.

Mr. Robin Squire: No.

Local Government Boundaries

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the legislative measures that govern the work of the Local Government Boundary Commission and the criteria it uses to review local government boundaries.

Mr. Robin Squire: The Local Government Boundary Commission is required under section 48(1) of the Local Government Act 1972 to carry out local government reviews as directed by the Secretary of State.

The commission must have regard to the need for effective and convenient local government.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if the Local Government Commission for England is to carry out an examination of the structure of local government in London; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robin Squire: There are no plans to change the general structure of local government in London. The Local Government Act 1992 provides for changes to local government structure to be made only where unitary authorities do not already exist—that is, in the shire counties of England. The new Local Government Commission will, however, have the power to recommend changes to local government boundaries and electoral arrangements in any area, including London.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Criminal Justice Services

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department in what ways he intends to support the criminal justice services; and if he will list the services he intends to support and the resources which will be available to them.

Mr. Jack: The main aims of the criminal justice system are detailed in paragraph 4.1 of the Home Office annual report, a copy of which is in the Library of the House.

My right hon. and learned Friend will continue the Government's support for the criminal justice services for which he has responsibility by ensuring that they can operate within an appropriate legislative framework, supported where necessary by administrative guidance, and by making appropriate financial provision. The criminal justice services for which he has statutory responsibility are prisons, for which the Home Office is directly responsible, and the police and probation services. In addition, the Home Office provides funding for the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board. In the current financial year, the Home Office will provide the following financial resources in the discharge of these responsibilities.

	£ million
Prisons	1,363
Police	3,016
Probation	355
Criminal Injuries Compensation Board	137

Terrorism

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action he is taking relating to the allocation of the various responsibilities of the police and others, in relation to anti-terrorist activities on the British mainland.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I refer the hon. Member to the statement I made on Friday 8 May.

Parliamentary Boundaries

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects the Boundary Commission to publish its findings for parliamentary seats in the county of Essex.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I understand that the Boundary Commission for England has not yet decided when it will publish its provisional recommendations for the county of Essex, although it is likely that this will be towards the end of the review.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects the parliamentary boundary commission to begin consultation on the review of parliamentary boundaries in London; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I understand that the Boundary Commission for England has not yet decided when it will publish its provisional recommendations for London boroughs, although it is likely that this will be towards the end of the review.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the legislative measures which govern the work of the parliamentary boundary commission and the criteria it uses to review parliamentary boundaries.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The legislation that governs the work of the parliamentary boundary commissions is the Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986. The criteria used to review parliamentary boundaries are set out in schedule 2 to that Act which gives the rules for the redistribution of seats.

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if the Parliamentary Boundary Commission for Wales will be working on the basis of the existing local government boundaries or the eventual government proposals for new boundaries.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The local government boundaries which will be used by the Parliamentary Boundary Commission for Wales in its next general review of constituencies will depend upon the timing of that review. This has yet to be decided.

Squatting

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to publish legislation arising out of the consultation paper dealing with the law on squatting; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: The Government are committed to improving remedies against squatting. A consultation paper setting out various options was published last October, requesting comments by 31 March. A wide variety of individuals and organisations responded.

These comments will be valuable in guiding work by ourselves and other Government Departments in determining how best to improve law in this area.

Voting

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department in what forms he holds information on the numbers of postal, proxy and expatriate votes issued and used during the 1987 and 1992 general elections.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The number of electors on the postal voters list and the number of postal ballot paper covering envelopes returned at the 1987 general election were published in "Election Expenses, a Return of the Expenses of each Candidate"—HC426—by HMSO. The statistics for the 1992 general election are currently being compiled from returns made by acting returning officers and will be published in due course. Information about the number of proxy voters voting in person—whether on behalf of United Kingdom residents or overseas electors—is not collected centrally. I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to a question from the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) on Monday 11 May 1992, at column *20*, for information about overseas electors.

Ticket Touts (FA Cup)

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it his policy to institute an inquiry into the activities of ticket touts at this year's Football Association cup final.

Mr. Charles Wardle: No. The distribution and sale of tickets for this event is a matter for the Football Association. The investigation of any criminal offences which may have been committed is an operational matter for the police. There is no role here for the Home Office.

EDUCATION

Ethnic Minorities

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Education when his Department last conducted a survey of the ethnic origin of its employees; when it next plans to do so; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Forman: A survey of the ethnic origins of staff was undertaken in 1990 since when our data base has been continuously updated as new staff join the Department. In addition in 1990 this Department launched its own programme of action to achieve equality of opportunity for people of ethnic minority origin. We have already achieved the objective to establish ethnic origin data on 98 per cent. of our staff.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many and what percentage of officers in grades 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7, respectively, and overall in his Department are members of ethnic minorities.

Mr. Forman: We do not hold information on the ethnic origin of all our staff but of those who have responded to the ethnic monitoring survey—98 per cent.—those from ethnic minorities at 1 May 1992 are:

	Number	*Percentage*
Grade 1-4	0	0
Grade 5-6	6	1
Grade 7	7	4
Overall	199	8

The survey was conducted on the understanding that anonymity would be preserved. Any further breakdown of the figures could identify individuals and cannot therefore be provided. The figures provided for each grade are on a head count basis and include grade equivalents.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what steps he has taken to recruit members of ethnic minorities in top grades of employment at his Department.

Mr. Forman: Recruitment of grades above administrative officer is undertaken by the Recruitment and Assessment Services agency on behalf of the Civil Service Commissioners. Various steps have been taken by the agency to aid recruitment of members of ethnic minorities including the increase of contacts with minority communities and extending links with universities, polytechnics and tertiary colleges to attract a wider range of applicants generally and specifically from ethnic minorities.

Bullying

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) what advice has been given by his Department to local education authorities on how to deal with bullying in schools;

(2) what representations he has received about the incidence of bullying in secondary schools;

(3) how many cases of bullying have been drawn to the attention of his Department over the past five years.

Mr. Forth: The report of the committee of inquiry into discipline in schools, chaired by Lord Elton and published in 1989, contained advice on bullying. Copies of the report were sent to all schools and local education authorities in England and Wales. The Department is currently funding research to identify successful intervention strategies in order to provide practical advice to all schools when the project is completed in August 1993. There are no central records on bullying.

National Union of Students

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what representations he has received about automatic membership of the National Union of Students.

Mr. Forman: During the course of the consultations initiated by the Government on student unions, my right hon. Friend has received a variety of representations on the membership of campus unions and the National Union

of Students. Students' membership of the NUS is indirect: it is a confederation of those campus unions which choose to affiliate.

Access Funds

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the access funds;

(2) what plans exist to increase the size of the access funds;

(3) what representations he has received about the adequacy of the access funds.

Mr. Forman: The present access funds are adequate for their purpose if properly targeted. The Government will consider future provision in this year's public expenditure survey. This will take into account representations received from various organisations and institutions.

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the current size of the access funds; what is the total number of students eligible for those funds; and what were the size of the funds and the number of students when the access funds were first introduced.

Mr. Forman: This year £25·8 million is available for England, Wales and Scotland and an estimated 863,000 higher and further education students are eligible for the access funds. For 1990-91 the figures were £25 million and 768,000 students. It is for institutions to decide which students should receive payments from their funds.

Grant-maintained Schools

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the total number of outstanding inquiries received about obtaining grant-maintained status.

Mr. Forth: There is no official record of inquiries about obtaining grant-maintained status; however, there are 43 outstanding proposals published by governors of schools seeking to obtain grant-maintained status.

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many primary schools have become grant-maintained.

Mr. Forth: There are 34 grant-maintained primary schools in England, with a further seven so far approved to begin in September 1992.

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what action he intends to take to facilitate grant-maintained schools becoming city technology colleges.

Mr. Forth: My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has made clear his commitment to extending the benefits of city technology colleges to schools wishing to become grant-maintained technology colleges. The Government will be setting out their proposals for this and other measures to extend parental choice and the diversity of schools in a White Paper to be published by the end of the summer.

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the total number of grant-maintained schools.

Mr. Forth: There are 217 GM schools operating in England, with a further 31 so far approved to begin in September 1992.

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the current average length of time taken to determine grant-maintained status.

Mr. Forth: The current average length of time from publication of proposals to decision is approximately 4·5 months.

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many denominational schools have obtained grant-maintained status; and how many inquiries are outstanding from such schools for grant-maintained status.

Mr. Forth: There are 17 denominational grant-maintained schools. Proposals for a further four have been approved. Proposals from two further schools will be determined in due course.

Police and Schools

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans he has to encourage greater co-operation between police and schools.

Mr. Forth: Under the Education (No. 2) Act 1986, school governing bodies are required to report annually to parents on steps taken to strengthen links with the community, including the police. Advice on good practice in police/school liaison was contained in HM inspectorate's publication "Our Policeman" published in 1989. The Elton report on "Discipline in Schools", distributed to all LEAs and schools in March 1989, also gave advice on links with the police. The Department is currently funding a research project by the National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders on the role of the education service in youth crime prevention. My right hon. Friend will wish to review the general question of links between schools and the police in the light of the outcomes of that project.

Truancy

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) what plans he has to reduce the incidence of truancy in schools;

(2) what is the estimated level of truancy in secondary schools *(a)* nationally and *(b)* by reference to local education authority area.

Mr. Forth: Truancy is a serious matter. It undermines the educational process and contributes to the juvenile crime rate. Figures are not collected centrally, but truancy is known to be particularly prevalent in the latter years of secondary schooling, where as many as one in five pupils in some schools truant. The Department is currently supporting through the grants for education support and training—GEST—programme projects in a number of LEAs designed to improve school attendance.

My right hon. Friend intends to make truancy a priority for the Department. In order to establish the full extent of the problem, maintained schools are required, from August 1992, to publish their rates of unauthorised absence. From this school year reports to parents on individual pupils will also record instances of truancy. In

accordance with the parents charter commitment, the Government intend to require the collection of truancy information for local comparative tables from 1993.

Teacher Training

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will bring forward plans to reform teacher training to provide for greater time to be spent on the practical as distinct from the theoretical aspect of teaching.

Mr. Forth: The Government issued in January a consultation document with proposals for the reform of the training of secondary school teachers. My right hon. Friend is studying the responses to those proposals and the advice he has recently received on the proposals from the Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education. It remains our intention to see a start made this September in the introduction of reforms on the lines we have proposed. The Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education has also been asked to advise on the reform of training for primary school teachers, taking account of the report on curriculum organisation and classroom practice in primary schools which was issued in February. The council has been asked to provide its advice by June.

Disciplinary Measures

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make a statement on the disciplinary measures available to teachers in secondary schools.

Mr. Forth: Effective learning can take place only in an orderly atmosphere. Headteachers are responsible for maintaining discipline within their schools on a day-to-day basis in accordance with any general principles set out by the governing body. Within the policies of individual schools teachers are free to adopt a range of disciplinary measures other than corporal punishment, which is prohibited in maintained schools and for certain categories of pupils in some independent schools. The Elton report on "Discipline in Schools", distributed to all LEAs and schools in March 1989, gave practical advice on action at school and classroom level to promote good behaviour and tackle bad behaviour.

League Tables

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make a statement about his plans regarding league tables of schools by examination results; and if he will make it his policy to broaden such tables to take account of a range of other factors including socio-economic, regional and ethnic mixes.

Mr. Forth: New regulations governing the publication of comparative tables of schools' performance in 1992 will be published later this month, together with a circular setting out the Government's policy.

The Department will continue to examine ways of improving the tables in future years, including the possible use of measures of pupils' progress through the national curriculum when the necessary information is available.

Staff Statistics

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what estimate he has made of the number of non-teaching staff employed by local education authorities and the Department of Education, full-time equivalents.

Mr. Forth: In December 1991, a total of 364,500 full-time equivalent staff other than teachers and lecturers were employed in local authority education in England. A further 2,400 full-time equivalent staff are currently employed in the Department for Education and Her Majesty's inspectorate.

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the number of teachers in local authority-funded schools, full-time equivalents.

Mr. Forth: In January 1991, a total of 392,500 full-time equivalent—FTE—teachers were employed in the LEA-maintained nursery, primary and secondary schools sector in England. A further 2,400 FTE teachers were employed in grant-maintained schools in England.

Education (Schools) Act 1992

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans he has for the implementation of the Education (Schools) Act 1992.

Mr. Patten: I have decided to recommend to the Queen in Council that Her Majesty should appoint Professor Stewart Sutherland, Vice-Chancellor of the university of London, as Her Majesty's chief inspector of schools in England for five years in the first instance with effect from 1 September 1992. I am delighted to have been able to secure Professor Sutherland's services for this important new job. I should like to thank the university of London for having accepted that he should take on this responsibility concurrently with the balance of his term as Vice-Chancellor of London university and indeed to be available immediately to help with the preparations for the new office.

The new schools inspection arrangements which we enacted in the last Parliament are a key component of the parents charter published last autumn. Professor Sutherland will bring just the right blend of academic distinction, administrative experience, authority and commitment to ensure the success of this initiative.

So as to be able to receive advice on matter relating to the strategic planning of the new office I have today appointed Professor Sutherland as a part-time consultant to the Department on the creation of the office of Her Majesty's chief inspector of schools.

National Curriculum

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what arrangements he intends to make for national curriculum assessments in 1993; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Patten: I have today published for consultation draft orders to govern the assessment under the national curriculum in 1993 of seven-year-olds in the core subjects —English, mathematics, science—and technology, history and geography, and of 14-year-olds in the core subjects and technology. I am placing copies of the draft orders, together with drafts of the accompanying circulars, in the Libraries of both Houses.

Next year's assessment of 14-year-olds will be the first under statutory arrangements. They will apply to all maintained secondary schools, city technology colleges and such independent schools as choose to participate. The key main features will be:

—short, unseen written examinations covering the key elements of each subject under assessment, with a standardised longer practical test of pupils' designing and making skills in technology;

—the assessment by teachers of each pupil's attainments on the basis of their school work across the whole of each subject to provide a detailed diagnosis of strengths and weaknesses which will inform GCSE option choices and future teaching;

—a rigorous audit by independent examining bodies of each school's test marking and teacher assessments before assessment results are reported to parents or published. The examining bodies will be designated by the Secretaries of State on the advice of the School Examinations and Assessment Council (SEAC);

—provision for test results to be preferred to teacher assessments in determining overall subject scores where both are available in relation to the same AT, with teacher assessments used in relation to attainment targets which are not tested.

We are proposing that the written examinations of 14-year-olds in 1993 should take place in the week beginning 7 June.

These arrangements, proposed in the light of advice from SEAC, will secure for the first time reliable assessments of 14-year-olds nationwide for the purpose of reporting to parents and more generally. They will also inform teachers of how, at a critical stage of development, each of their pupils is progressing in each aspect of each subject. They will provide the underpinning to raise standards of achievement in our secondary schools.

WALES

PCBs

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what contribution his Department has *(a)* made to date and *(b)* plans to make to the revision of waste management paper No. 6 on technical guidance on the treatment and disposal of polychlorinated byphenel wastes.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Waste management papers are produced by the Department of the Environment who will be consulting other Government Departments including the Welsh Office on the revision of waste management paper No. 6.

National Curriculum

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what arrangements he intends to make for the national curriculum assessment arrangements in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: I have today published for consultation, in parallel with the Secretary of State for Education, draft orders to govern next year's arrangements to assess 14-year-olds in Wales, and those for seven-year-olds will be published later this week.

Next year's assessments will be the first statutory arrangements for 14-year-olds and will cover the core subjects, technology and, where taught, Welsh second language. The arrangements are intended to be rigorous and informative and will comprise:

Predominantly a combination of short, written, timed examinations and teachers' own assessment of pupils' attainment based on their continuous school work;

Provision for test results to be preferred to teacher assessments in determining overall subject scores where both are available in relation to the same attainment target, with teacher asssessments used in relation to attainment targets which are not subject to such tests;

The assessment of Welsh and Welsh second language will provide for the testing of oral skills, and technology will include a longer practical task to test pupils' designing and making skills in this subject;

The consistency of standards and results between schools and LEAs in Wales will be audited by an independent examining body before reports are made to parents or the results published more generally;

In line with the arrangements for schools in England it is proposed that the written tests for 14-year-olds in 1993 should take place in week commencing 7 June.

The proposed arrangements, which are based on the advice and development work of the School Examinations and Assessment Council, are intended to provide a rigorous and reliable assessment of 14-year-olds as they prepare for future GCSE and other public examinations later in their schooling. They will apply to both LEA maintained and grant-maintained schools in Wales and such independent schools as choose to participate. The results will be fully reported to parents.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

RMS St. Helena

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether there has been any change in the unions recognised to represent the crews of RMS St. Helena.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Recognition of the National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers—RMT—was withdrawn by the St. Helena Government with effect from 1 January 1992. The St. Helena Government will recognise the St. Helena General Workers Union or any other local body or group selected by the crew to represent them in negotiations with the employers.

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent arrangements have been made about the salaries of the officers and crew of RMS St. Helena.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: These arrangements are a matter for the St. Helena Government, as employers, and the officers and ratings and not for Her Majesty's Government.

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list those companies qualifying to tender for the new RMS St. Helena contract.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 11 May 1992]:* The closing date for companies to express an interest in tendering for the new contract for the management of RMS St. Helena was Friday 8 May. The indications are that there has been a very substantial response. A decision on those who will be invited to tender will be made shortly.

"Children by Choice not Chance"

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether copies of the full report, or a salient summary, of the Overseas Development Administration's report "Children by Choice not Chance" will be made available by the British delegation to the UN Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro in June.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 11 May 1992]*: Yes, copies of "Children by Choice not Chance" will be made available by the British delegation at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro in June. Copies of the booklet were also distributed to participants at a preparatory meeting for the conference last August.

Forest Management

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether the Overseas Development Administration was represented at the lecture on wise forest management by Don Cleary at the recent Oxford tropical forest conference; and what action is being taken in the area of forest management.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 11 May 1992]*: The ODA was represented at the Oxford Forestry Institute tropical forestry conference. Promoting the sustainable management of tropical forests is the prime purpose of ODA-funded activities in this field. It includes taking full account of relevant social issues.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Data Collection

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he has any plans to change the way in which his Department collects data on the agricultural industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: The ways in which my Department collects statistical data on the agricultural industry are kept under continual review, including through the survey control system. I have no plans at present for significant changes.

Cattle (Salmonella)

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food in what circumstances his Department sends in its veterinary services to investigate cases of salmonella poisoning in cattle; what charges are then payable by the farmers concerned; and whether these arrangements differ depending upon whether farmers are involved in milk or meat production.

Mr. Soames: The Zoonoses Order 1989 requires isolations of salmonella to be notified to a veterinary officer of the Ministry. The action taken by the Ministry on receipt of a salmonella report depends on the circumstances of the case and in particular whether it is considered to be primarily an animal health matter or a human health risk.

The responsibility for dealing with animal health matters rests with the farmer's veterinary surgeon since the animals are under his care. If the veterinary surgeon requests further advice from the Ministry's state veterinary service, on an animal health matter, an advisory visit to the farm would be provided on a chargeable basis.

The charge for an advisory visit is based on the time spent by the veterinary investigation officer on the farm with possible additional charges for any laboratory examinations carried out on samples taken during the visit.

Where the Ministry considers that there are significant human health risks associated with the case the matter is investigated free of charge by the state veterinary service in collaboration, where appropriate, with the local medical and environmental health authorities. The farmer's veterinary surgeon is informed of the action to be taken.

These procedures apply irrespective of whether a farmer is involved in milk or meat production.

Fisheries Conservation

Mr. Trotter: To ask the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his policy on measures to supplement European Community requirements for fisheries conservation.

Mr. Curry: The EC Fisheries Council agreed in October 1991 on a significant package of technical conservation measures which take effect from 1 June 1992. United Kingdom fishermen made it clear that they were willing to go further in some respects in order to help conservation. After consulting the industry we have decided to apply the following additional and complementary measures on a national basis from 1 June.

For all United Kingdom vessels we shall operate a minimum landing size for whiting maintained at 27 cm rather than reduced to 23 cm as allowed for by the EC; an anti-ballooning provision for whitefish fisheries which is designed to prevent closure of meshes by requiring the circumference of the cod end of the net to be no greater than that of the adjacent part of the net.

In the North sea and west of Scotland area where the EC's minimum mesh size is to increase to 100 mm for roundfish fisheries the EC's further measure to permit the optional use of a square mesh panel will be adopted. While we shall no longer require a 90 mm square mesh panel in a 90 mm diamond mesh net, mesh selectivity will be enhanced by the EC provision to limit the number of meshes round the cod end and our own anti-ballooning provision.

To complement the increase in the EC's minimum mesh size in the Irish sea from 70 to 80 mm we shall increase our present unilateral requirement for a square mesh panel from 75 to 80 mm for all whitefish nets with meshes between 80 and 89 mm inclusive in the Irish sea—area VIIA—and also apply the same requirement in area VI south of 56° N to remove the anomalous position of this area and to assist enforcement.

We shall continue to require the use of an 80 mm square mesh panel when fishing for nephrops in areas IV and VI. We shall retain the present requirement for a 75 mm square mesh panel for nephrops nets with meshes of between 70 and 85 mm inclusive in the Irish sea—area VIIa—and introduce it for all nephrops nets in the rest of area VII. In this way the discards of young whitefish from all nephrops fisheries undertaken by United Kingdom vessels should be reduced.

Further, from 1 June all licensed fishing vessels will be subject to a one net rule, designed to improve the enforcement of minimum mesh size nets, and we intend to apply it to smaller vessels when licensing is extended to them.

The necessary regulations will be laid shortly.

I greatly welcome the constructive response of the United Kingdom fishing industry to the need for national measures to supplement the new Community measures being applied from 1 June because as a significant fishing nation we have a strong interest in making conservation work. We will continue to work for agreement on similar

measures and further improvements in the EC technical conservation measures, but in the meanwhile the national measures which we are introducing will make an important additional contribution to conserving the stocks, including hard-pressed haddock and cod stocks in the North sea, of which United Kingdom fishermen take 89 per cent. and 46 per cent. respectively. These conservation measures are vital to our fishermen's long-term future and to our consumers.

We are very pleased that the Irish Government too intend to maintain the minimum landing size for whiting for Irish vessels at 27cm. We regard this joint move in the Irish sea as very important and we are exploring ways of taking this collaboration further.

TRANSPORT

Road Humps

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when traffic calming measures are being considered, what discretion exists for local authorities to decide the distance between humps installed on urban roads.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Local highway authorities are required to comply with the Highways (Road Humps) Regulations 1990 which state, in regulation 2, that road humps forming a series of two or more shall be spaced so that not less than 20 m nor more than 150 m lies between one hump and the one next to it.

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many complaints the Department has received from road users about the installation of road humps.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: There have been some complaints, but no central record is kept of the number of these and it would not be economic to produce such figures. Most representations received by the Department about road humps are positive and relate to practical advice on siting and installation.

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations the Department has received from the Road Haulage Association, bus users' associations and other similar trade bodies about road humps.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Comments were received from a wide range of interested organisations including the Road Haulage Association and bus users' associations who were consulted when the road humps regulations were made.

Port of Tilbury

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport for how much the port of Tilbury was sold; and what was the valuation of the port of Tilbury, as advised to him or the Port of London Authority, prior to the sale.

Mr. Norris: The port of Tilbury was sold to International Transport Ltd, a management and employee buy-out team, at a price of £32 million. Prior to the sale the Port of London Authority, as the vendors, were advised of benchmark valuation ranges for the sale of the port of Tilbury of £27 million to £37 million for a trade sale and of £25 million to £34 million for a leveraged buy-out.

Stockport Bypass

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to meet a deputation from the Stockport metropolitan borough council to discuss the line of route of the Stockport north-south A6(M) bypass.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Arrangements for a meeting will be put in hand shortly.

London Underground

Mr. Dover: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proposals he has received to improve services on the northern line of London Underground.

Mr. Norris: The service has already improved significantly. London Underground Limited has a number of proposals to improve it further, not all of which require Government approval. LUL's intention is to undertake full modernisation of the Northern line following the modernisation of the Central line which is currently under way.

M1-M62 Link Road

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will carry out an integrated transport study before making a decision to proceed with either of the proposed routes for the M1-M62 link road; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: No. The proposed M1-M62 link road is designed to overcome road traffic problems which already exist.

Roads (South-east Essex)

Dr. Spink: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to assist Essex county council to bring forward funding for road projects in south-east Essex; and if he will visit the area to assess the need for himself.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: I shall give careful consideration to any proposals which the county may wish to make as part of their bid for transport supplementary grant and credit approvals for capital spending on local roads in 1993-94.

I have no plans at present to visit south-east Essex. There are regular meetings between Department of Transport officials and officers of the county council, and the Department is kept well informed about the county's needs.

Road Accidents

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the annual rate of death and serious injury on the roads for each quarter from 1986 and show index figures, using the latest quarter as 100.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The information requested is given in the table.

Deaths and serious injuries in road accidents: cumulative totals for 4 quarters ending in each quarter: Great Britain: 1986 to 1991

Year ending		Casualties: 4 quarter totals			Index 1991 Q4 = 100		
		Killed	Seriously injured	Killed or seriously injured	Killed	Seriously injured	Killed or seriously injured
1986	Q1	5,255	71,315	76,570	116	138	137
	Q2	5,280	70,440	75,720	117	137	135
	Q3	5,298	68,815	74,113	117	134	132
	Q4	5,382	68,752	74,134	119	134	132
1987	Q1	5,271	66,909	72,180	117	130	129
	Q2	5,282	66,638	71,920	117	129	128
	Q3	5,300	66,464	71,764	117	129	128
	Q4	5,125	64,293	69,418	113	125	124
1988	Q1	5,179	66,321	71,500	115	129	128
	Q2	5,113	65,136	70,249	113	126	125
	Q3	5,000	64,047	69,047	111	124	123
	Q4	5,052	63,491	68,543	112	123	122
1989	Q1	5,180	63,053	68,233	115	122	122
	Q2	5,189	63,311	68,500	115	123	122
	Q3	5,315	63,092	68,407	118	123	122
	Q4	5,373	63,158	68,531	119	123	122
1990	Q1	5,419	63,299	68,718	120	123	123
	Q2	5,487	62,738	68,225	121	122	122
	Q3	5,332	61,943	67,275	118	120	120
	Q4	5,217	60,441	65,658	115	117	117
1991	[1]Q1	4,901	57,445	62,346	108	112	111
	[1]Q2	4,681	55,524	60,205	104	108	107
	[1]Q3	4,598	53,334	57,932	102	104	103
	[1]Q4	4,520	51,499	56,019	100	100	100

[1] Provisional estimate.

A664-M6 Junction

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to announce his decision following the most recent public inquiry into the junction of the A664 with the M66.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The inspector's report is expected shortly. I shall make an announcement as soon as I have considered it.

Wheel Clamping (Newham)

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will discuss with the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis the designation of High street north, Katherine road, Green street and Upton lane in the London borough of Newham as streets for wheel clamping for unlawfully parked vehicles.

Mr. Norris: It is for local highway authorities to apply to the Secretary of State to authorise wheelclamping in their area. The police would then be consulted. No such application has been received from the London borough of Newham.

Transport and Works Act 1992

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to publish the regulations governing major transport projects under the Transport and Works Act 1992; and when guidelines affecting the new procedures might be made available.

Mr. Freeman: A draft of the rules to govern applications for, and objections to, orders was issued on 2 January. A revised draft will be circulated for comment in the next two to three weeks. A draft of the rules on procedures for public inquiries will be published shortly. We shall consult on the administrative guidelines when the application and inquiries' rules have been settled in principle.

Emergency Telephones (A12)

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if a date during 1992-93 has yet been established for the installation of emergency telephones on the A12; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Detailed design work for the installation of emergency telephones on the A12 Chelmsford bypass is currently being carried out. Once the design has been finalised the programme for installation will be drawn up. Only then will a specific date for completion be available.

Funds have been set aside for completion of the work in this financial year.

British International Helicopters

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will carry out an inquiry in his Department to assess the role of the Department at the time when the late Robert Maxwell acquired British International Helicopters; and if he will make a statement about what he now intends to do to help British International Helicopters staff.

Mr. Norris: I see no need for an inquiry. British International Helicopters—BIH—formerly British Airways Helicopters Limited—BAHL—a subsidiary of

British Airways, was sold in September 1986. The decision to sell BAHL and the details of the negotiations were commercial matters for the British Airways Board.

British International Helicopters is presently in joint administration and it would not be appropriate for me to comment on how the administrator is pursuing his responsibilities.

Wye River Bridge

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what effect on road accident figures was recorded following the introduction of speed calming humps on the M4 approach to the Wye river bridge.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: These rumble strips, which were not humps, were installed as part of a comprehensive scheme of traffic management during the strengthening and resurfacing work on the Severn crossing. It is not possible to say what effect they alone had on the accident rate.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Population Statistics

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the mid-1991 estimates by the Register-General of Populations of those aged 17 years and over, plus 63 per cent. of those aged 16 years for each district council area and parliamentary constituency in Northern Ireland, together in each case with the 1992 electoral registration figures.

Mr. Hanley: Estimates of those aged 17 years and over, and of those aged 16, are not available in the form requested. The 1992 electoral registration figures, however, are as follows:

United Kingdom Parliamentary Constituency Totals for 1992

	Total
Belfast East	53,375
Belfast North	55,587
Belfast South	52,556
Belfast West	55,280
East Antrim	63,739
East Londonderry	76,912
Fermanagh and South Tyrone	71,472
Foyle	75,970
Lagan Valley	73,688
Mid Ulster	70,410
Newry and Armagh	68,716
North Antrim	70,217
North Down	69,604
Strangford	69,855
South Antrim	68,292
South Down	77,371
Upper Bann	68,422
Total	1,141,466

(ii) Northern Ireland district council totals for 1992

	Total
Derry	63,309
Limavady	19,282
Coleraine	37,138
Ballymoney	17,610
Moyle	10,509
Larne	22,318
Ballymena	42,091
Magherafelt	25,611
Cookstown	21,637
Strabane	25,319
Omagh	30,973
Fermanagh	39,112
Dungannon	32,354
Craigavon	54,520
Armagh	36,222
Newry and Mourne	58,207
Banbridge	24,891
Down	40,656
Lisburn	69,472
Antrim	30,227
Newtownabbey	55,155
Carrickfergus	24,527
North Down	54,464
Ards	49,089
Castlereagh	47,505
Belfast	209,126
Total	1,141,324

Voting

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland in what forms he holds information on the numbers of postal, proxy and expatriate votes issued and used during the 1987 and 1992 general elections.

Mr. Hanley: The chief electoral officer for Northern Ireland holds information, defined by parliamentary constituency, on the number of postal votes issued and the number of postal votes returned. He also records the number of proxies appointed and the number of overseas voters registered but not the number of proxy or overseas votes cast.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Ethnic Minorities

Mr. Janner: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many and what percentage of officers in grades 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7, respectively, and overall in his Department are members of ethnic minorities.

Mr. Nelson: The information requested in respect of grades 1 to 7 in the Treasury is shown in the table. Ethnic origin data is held for 87 per cent. of Treasury staff and of this total 8 per cent. are from ethnic minorities. Figures reflect the position as at 1 January 1992 and are for non-industrials only, including agency staff.

Ethnic minorities

Grade	*Number*	*Per cent.*
1 and 1A	—	—
2	—	—
3	—	—
4	—	—
5	—	—
6	—	—
7	2	1

Mr. Janner: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps he has taken to recruit members of ethnic minorities in top grades of employment at Her Majesty's Treasury and other departments within his responsibility.

Mr. Nelson: Recruitment to senior grades of the civil service is undertaken by the Recruitment and Assessment

Services agency on behalf of the Civil Service Commissioners. Various steps have been taken by these bodies and by the Chancellor's departments to aid recruitment of members of ethnic minorities including increasing contacts with minority communities including image-building publicity in the ethnic minority press; extending links with polytechnics, universities and tertiary colleges to attract a wider range of applicants generally and specifically from ethnic minority communities; increasing representation of ethnic minorities among career liaison staff and on selection panels; ensuring that recruitment brochures reflect a multi-racial work force; organising equal opportunities training for those involved in selection; and using validated selection procedures to ensure that selection is fair and non-discriminatory.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when his Department last conducted a survey of the ethnic origin of its employees; when it next plans to do so; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Nelson: A survey of members of Treasury staff for whom no ethnic origins information was held was undertaken in December 1990. The total proportion of Treasury staff for whom ethnic origin data is held now stands at 87 per cent. Consideration is being given to whether a further survey should be conducted to try and increase the coverage of the Department's ethnic origin database.

Foreign Vessels (Crews)

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give the number of *(a)* Spanish and *(b)* Dutch vessels registered as British whose skippers and crews pay income tax and national insurance contributions in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Dorrell: I regret that this information is not available.

Value Added Tax

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he will remove VAT from sanitary towels and other related products;

(2) if he will make a statement on the reasons for the maintenance of VAT on sanitary towels and other related protection.

Sir John Cope: VAT was designed as a broad-based tax on consumer expenditure, including many essential goods and services, and reliefs have to be firmly restricted. In any event, EC VAT law prohibits the introduction of any new zero rates.

Manufacturing Investment

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the level of investment in manufacturing industry in 1979; and what it is currently.

Mr. Portillo: Estimates of manufacturing investment at constant prices may be obtained from the CSO database which is accessible through the House of Commons Library.

GDP

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what is the current share of Government spending in gross domestic product;

(2) if he will set out the share of Government spending in gross domestic product in each year since 1978.

Mr. Nelson: Figures for general Government—central Government plus local authorities—total expenditure on goods and services as a percentage of the expenditure-based measure of gross domestic product, both at current market prices, from 1978 to 1991, are given in the table.

Year	*Percentage*
1978	22·5
1979	22·2
1980	23·5
1981	23·4
1982	23·2
1983	23·5
1984	23·6
1985	22·8
1986	22·6
1987	22·0
1988	21·0
1989	21·2
1990	22·3
1991	22·3

Figures for financial years for the ratio of general Government expenditure excluding privatisation proceeds to gross domestic product were set out in the 1992-93 "Financial Statement and Budget Report", table 2A.1.

Public Sector Expenditure

Mr. Battle: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps will be taken to reduce the share of national income taken by the public sector as outlined in the Queen's Speech; and what services are targeted for reduction.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 11 May 1992]:* Decisions on public spending plans for the next three years will be announced, in the usual way, in the autumn statement.

EC Treaties

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what date is laid down in the time limit contained in article 7a of the treaty of Rome referred to in the revised article 99 in paragraph 20 of article G of the treaty of European union.

Sir John Cope *[holding answer 11 May 1992]:* The date specified is 31 December 1992.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the significance of the reference to article 7a in the revised article 99 under paragraph 20 of article G of the Maastricht treaty; and which articles of the treaty of Rome are amended by the provision.

Sir John Cope *[holding answer 11 May 1992]:* Article 7a is article 8a of the treaty of Rome as amended by the Single European Act as it is proposed to be renumbered by the Maastricht treaty. A consequence of this proposed renumbering is that the reference to article 8a in article 99

of the treaty of Rome also needs to be changed. The change is therefore one of numbering with no further practical significance.

It does not amend any other articles of the treaty of Rome.

EC Co-operative Statute

Mr. Michael: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the organisations he has consulted to date on the draft European co-operative statute adopted by the European Commission in December 1991.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 11 May 1992]:* No consultation document has yet been issued by the Treasury and Registry of Friendly Societies will shortly be producing one as part of a formal consultation exercise. The intention is to seek views from a wide range of interested parties.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what response he has received to date on the draft European co-operative statute.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 11 May 1992]:* I have so far received submissions and views from a variety of organisations. A formal consultation exercise is due to begin shortly, which will seek the views of a wide range of interested parties.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will make a statement on the publication of letters from chief executives of "next steps" agencies in reply to parliamentary questions.

Mr. Newton: Following the announcement by my predecessor on 27 November 1991, *Official Report*, column *552*, the Government submitted proposals to the House authorities for publishing replies from agency chief executives. The Administration Committee considered the Government's proposals in March and decided to seek further advice from the relevant House authorities. The Government hope that the House will take an early decision on the matter once the House Committees are reconstituted.

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Lord President of the Council when he expects to reply to the third report of the Procedure Committee, session 1990-91, HC 178, on parliamentary questions.

Mr. Newton: I am considering the report and will reply in due course.

EMPLOYMENT

Ethnic Minorities

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when her Department last conducted a survey of the ethnic origin of its employees; when it next plans to do so; and whether she will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: The survey of the ethnic origin of staff which took place in 1986 is continuously updated to take account of those entering and leaving the Department.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many and what percentage of officers in grades 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7, respectively, and overall in her Departments are members of ethnic minorities.

Mr. McLoughlin: At 1 April 1992 there were no employees who classified themselves as being of ethnic minority origin in grades 1-6. At the same date there were 9—0·9 per cent.—at grade 7, and 3,607—6·4 per cent.—in the Department as a whole, who classified themselves as being of ethnic minority origin.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps she has taken to recruit members of ethnic minorities in top grades of employment at her Department.

Mr. McLoughlin: Senior grades are recruited by the Recruitment and Assessment Services agency on behalf of the Civil Service Commissioners. The agency has taken a number of steps to aid recruitment from the ethnic minorities. The Department has implemented equal opportunities programmes which focus on the need to increase the representation of ethnic minorities, and women and people with disabilities. It also encourages applications from the ethnic minorities for its management trainee scheme and has run pre-recruitment training.

HEALTH

GP Fund Holders

14. **Mr. Robert B. Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many general practitioner practices in the Dacorum borough council area are now fund holders.

Dr. Mawhinney: I am informed by the chairman of North West Thames regional health authority that there are six GP fundholders in the Dacorum council area.

20. **Mr. David Shaw:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many family doctors are interested in managing their own funds from April 1993; what was the comparable number for April 1992; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: Just over 3,150 GPs are currently fund holders: a further 3,450 have expressed an interest in joining the scheme from April 1993, which would mean that one in four patients will then enjoy the benefits it brings. This is a massive vote of confidence in the scheme.

Mr. Adley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she intends to meet the British Medical Association to discuss practice budgets; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: Ministers regularly meet the BMA to discuss matters of mutual interest. We have no specific plans to discuss practice budgets.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she proposes to introduce any upper limit on the collective purchasing power of fund-holding general practitioners in individual health districts.

Dr. Mawhinney: No.

London Ambulance Service

15. **Ms. Abbott:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she next plans to meet the head of the London Ambulance service.

Mr. Sackville: I expect to have regular meetings with the chairman of South West Thames regional health authority and the chairman of the London Ambulance Service.

NHS Trust Hospitals

16. **Mr. Jessel:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the progress of national health service trust hospitals.

Dr. Mawhinney: A total of 156 NHS trusts are currently operational. A total of 123 applications have so far been received from hospitals and other units to become operational from April 1993. The first wave of NHS trusts are already demonstrating benefits to patients and we see trusts as the management model of the future.

Community Care

17. **Mr. Tom Clarke:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when Her Majesty's Government intend to implement the community care section of the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: We set out the timetable for implementing our community care reforms in 1990. Many of them have already been achieved. We are on course to achieve the remainder by April 1993.

26. **Ms. Lynne:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the implementation of Her Majesty's Government's proposals for community care.

Dr. Mawhinney: We set out the timetable for implementing our community care reforms in 1990. Many of them have already been achieved. Local authorities introduced arm's length inspection units and complaints procedures in 1991. At the same time we introduced the mental illness specific grant which will support £43 million of expenditure this year and the alcohol and drugs specific grant which supports £3 million of expenditure this year. Virtually all authorities have published their first community care plans this April as required under the 1990 Act. We are on course to implement the remainder of our reforms by April 1993.

Patient Statistics

18. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the average number of patients on each general practitioner's list *(a)* in 1978 and *(b)* in 1990; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: At 1 October 1978, the average number of patients on general medical practitioner lists in England was 2,312, and at 1 October 1990 this had reduced by 16 per cent. to 1,942. The average list size in England has continued to fall, and at 1 October 1991, the latest date for which figures are available, it stood at 1,887.

Health Care

19. **Ms. Janet Anderson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps she is taking to increase patient involvement in decisions on future patterns of health care.

Mr. Sackville: We published a paper entitled "Local Voices" in January this year with practical guidance to health authorities about ways for involving local people in shaping health services and have written to health authority chairmen to reinforce the important role of community health councils in representing patients' interests. The patients' charter, which sets out clearly people's rights under the National Health Service, reinforces the onus on health authorities to be responsive to patient's views.

Health Inequalities

21. **Mr. Michael O'Brien:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action she is taking to reduce inequalities in health between both regions and social classes.

Dr. Mawhinney: With a reformed and better-resourced health service, we are improving the identification of need and the delivery of its services so that they are more responsive to variations in health. Our forthcoming health strategy will extend to wider influences on health and lead to practicable initiatives which are sensitive to those variations.

Cancer

22. **Mr. Simpson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the correlation between people living close to electricity pylons and the incidence of cancer.

Mr. Sackville: The National Radiological Protection Board's advisory group reported on electromagnetic fields and the risk of cancer at the end of March this year. It concluded that there is no firm evidence of a carcinogenic hazard from the normal levels of power frequency electromagnetic fields to which people are exposed. The report will be referred to the Committee on Medical Aspects of Radiation in the Environment.

Bolingbroke Hospital

23. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will visit Bolingbroke hospital.

Mr. Sackville: My right hon. Friend has no current plans to visit Bolingbroke Hospital, but we do congratulate the management of the hospital on its enterprising and imaginative response to raising the quality of services for patients.

Families

24. **Mr. Peter Bottomley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how she proposes to bring the family perspective and family life cycle into social and economic policy making.

Mr. Yeo: The Government recognise the importance of the family both in terms of its individual members and as providing the best environment for the upbringing of children. The objective of our policies is to advise, help and support families rather than to replace their traditional role with professional services. In health, the Government fully support and are implementing the EC recommendation on childcare whose focus includes leave arrangements for working parents and the equitable sharing of parental responsibilities. The NHS has taken a leading role in implementing "Opportunity 2000" which will increase the quality and extent of women's participation in the

workplace and the Department of Health is considering with voluntary organisations ways in which the United Nations International Year of the Family in 1994 might be marked in the United Kingdom.

Health Service Contracts

25. **Mr. Ray Powell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will outlaw clauses in health service contracts which prevent national health service staff speaking out on matters of professional and public concern.

Dr. Mawhinney: Contracts of employment for NHS staff are a matter for negotiation between the employing authority and its employees. Where such contracts include provisions on confidentiality, I understand these are intended to safeguard the confidentiality of sensitive data, such as personal data about individual patients, and not to inhibit expression, through proper channels, of professional opinion about health service issues.

Diabetes

27. **Mr. Bradley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether there are any plans to introduce pen injection systems on general practitioner prescriptions for people with diabetes.

Dr. Mawhinney: The addition of insulin pen systems to the list of items GPs may prescribe is the subject of continuing negotiations with manufacturers. New additions to the prescribable list must be subject to the availability of resources and decisions on other competing priorities.

Ethnic Minorities

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps she has taken to recruit members of ethnic minorities in top grades of employment at her Department.

Mr. Sackville: Recruitment for most established appointments at senior level is undertaken by the Recruitment and Assessment Services agency, which follows initiatives to aid the recruitment of members of ethnic minorities. The Department supports these initiatives when carrying out recruitment at all, including senior, levels.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many and what percentage of officers in grades 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7, respectively, and overall in her Department are members of ethnic minorities.

Mr. Sackville: The information requested is set out in the table.

Grade	*Total staff*[1] *(Numbers)*	*Ethnic Minority*[2] *Number*	*Per cent.*
1	1	—	—
2	7	—	—
3	26	—	—
4 and equivalents	24	—	—
5 and equivalents	163	9	5·5
6 and equivalents	86	4	4·7
7 and equivalents	504	18	3·6
All grades (including 1-7)	4,516	539	15·0

Notes:

[1] Based on Department's payroll figures as at 3 February 1992—latest figures available, which include NHS Estates and Medicines Control Agency.

[2] Based on response to Department's Ethnic Origin Survey.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when her Department last conducted a survey of the ethnic origin of its employees; when it next plans to do so; and whether she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: The last survey of the ethnic origins of members of the Department was conducted during June and July 1991. A further survey is planned for later this year.

Tobacco

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list for the past 20 years the information she has for each EC country on the rates of tobacco consumption, the proportions of smokers and the date of any ban on advertising of tobacco.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information is not held centrally in the form requested. Information on tobacco consumption and on advertising restrictions in OECD countries is contained in an article published in the "British Journal of Addiction"—1991—86, 1343-1354 and some data on smoking prevalence in EC member states is in an article in the *British Medical Journal*, volume 304, pages 370-72. Copies of these journals are available in the Library.

Solvent Abuse Exhibition

Mr. Trotter: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if his Department has considered an application for an exhibition relating to the work of Resolve in combating the problem of solvent abuse to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall.

Dr. Mawhinney: Under procedures agreed by the Administration Committee, I understand that arrangements have been made with the authorities of the House for the exhibition to be held in the Upper Waiting Hall from 15 to 19 June 1992. I welcome the opportunity this will give to raise awareness of solvent misuse issues.

Asthma Inhalers

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will issue an approval for the use of recycled chlorofluorocarbons in asthma inhalers and preparation of other medicinal products; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: Approval for the sale or supply of any medicinal product in the United Kingdom is given following an application which satisfies the Licensing Authority in respect of safety, quality and efficacy as laid down in the Medicines Act; an application for a medicinal product containing recycled chlorofluorocarbons would therefore be subject to those criteria.

Population Statistics

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the mid-1991 estimates by the Registrar-General of Populations of those aged 17 years and over, plus 63 per cent. of those aged 16 years for each district council area and parliamentary constituency in England and Wales, together in each case with the 1992 electoral registration figures.

Mr. Sackville: Mid-year population estimates are prepared by OPCS for local authority areas but not for parliamentary constituencies. Preliminary estimates relating to mid-1991 taking account of initial 1991 census results will be published in October 1992. The 1992 electorate figures have already been published for parliamentary constituencies and local authority areas, in OPCS Monitors EL 92/1 and EL 92/2 respectively. Copies of both Monitors are available in the Library.

Expenditure

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much the Government plan to spend on the NHS in 1992-93; and what was the amount in *(a)* 1978-79, *(b)* 1986-87 and *(c)* in 1991-92.

Mr. Sackville: Gross NHS expenditure in England is planned to be £28·9 (27·6) billion in 1992-93. Gross NHS expenditure in England was £6·5 (6·3) billion in 1978-79, £16·0 (£15·2) billion in 1986-87 and £26·6 (25·2) billion in 1991-92 (net figures shown in brackets).

This represents a real terms increase in gross spending of 56·9 per cent. since 1978-79.

Dentists

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the remuneration of NHS dentists.

Dr. Mawhinney: For 1992-93 the target average net income of general dental practitioners is £35,815, an increase in real terms of 33 per cent. over the figure for 1979-80. In 1990-91 nearly a fifth of dentists who did any NHS work earned from the NHS more than £100,000 gross, that is including all expenses. In the same year, expenditure on the general dental service in England alone exceeded £1 billion; an increase of 43 per cent. in real terms since 1979.

The proposed increase in target net income of 8·5 per cent. which was recommended by the Doctors' and Dentists' Review Body for 1992-93 was accepted in full by the Government. In the normal way, the Health Departments then consulted the general dental services committee—GDSC—about the fees needed to deliver this level of net income. Following discussions between the GDSC and the Health Departments, agreement was reached to hold a joint inquiry to review the level of payments to dentists in 1991-92, the results of which will be considered by the Health Departments and the GDSC later this month when they reconsider the appropriate fee scale for 1992-93. Work on the inquiry is continuing. Simultaneously, they will begin a more fundamental review of the structure of dentists' remuneration.

Audit Standards

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps she has taken to ensure the adequacy of internal NHS audit standards following the division of many health authority audit teams arising from the formation of trusts.

Mr. Sackville: All health authorities are required to comply with the minimum standards for internal audit laid down in volume 1 of the NHS internal audit manual. The objectives and scope of internal audit in NHS trusts are based on these standards.

Internal audit services are provided by a variety of methods, including in house staff, consortia arrangements, or under contract with other public authorities or external firms of auditors. It is a matter for authorities and NHS trusts to determine how internal audit services should be provided to ensure compliance with the minimum standards. Each year external auditors review the provision of internal audit services in all NHS bodies and form a view on their overall effectiveness. Where external auditors are dissatisfied with internal audit provisions, they will formally report their findings to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State.

Learning Disabilities

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health under what circumstances health authorities are required to accept responsibility for the long-term or short-term care of people with learning disabilities.

Mr. Yeo: The role of the national health service in meeting the long and short term health care needs of people with learning disabilities is set out in the statement of Government policy made by my hon. Friend the then Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, at the MENCAP conference in June 1991, a copy of which is available in the Library.

In the transition to community-based services health authorities have a continuing responsibility for residents of mental handicap hospitals and others for whom they have been providing social care. Changes in the current pattern of provision of services should be made only as part of an agreed strategy between the relevant health and local authorities.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what research has been undertaken recently by her Department into the adequacy of day-care provision for adults with learning disabilities.

Mr. Yeo: The Department's social services inspectorate carried out a national inspection of local authority day services for people with learning disabilities and a copy of their report "Individuals Programmes and Plans" was published in 1989. It is available in the Library.

Elderly People

Mr. Hoon: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps she is taking to develop a wider diversity in provisions for elderly people in need of care.

Mr. Yeo: We are taking forward a wide range of measures to encourage independent living in the community, and to minimise in-patient stays, consistent with high quality care. We are committed to the full implementation of community care from April 1993, and are putting in an extra £6 million starting in the current year to boost domiciliary care schemes and provide further help for carers.

Measles

Mrs. Currie: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many deaths from measles occurred in 1991 or the most recent year available.

Mr. Yeo: In 1990 and 1991, for the first time since records began in the 1940s, there were no reports of deaths from acute measles-related illness in England and Wales.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Guinness and Blue Arrow

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he expects to publish the Guinness and Blue Arrow reports.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: In the Guinness case, the inspectors have submitted an interim report. This has not been published because of the possibility of prejudice to the criminal proceedings. The inspectors will submit their final report following the conclusion of these proceedings. Consideration of publication of that report must await its receipt.

In the Blue Arrow case, publication of the report was deferred in the light of representations which were received. My right hon. Friend intends to publish the report as soon as he considers it appropriate to do so.

Beer Orders

Mr. Viggers: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will review the operation of the beer orders.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The Director General of Fair Trading has been asked to review the beer orders in late 1993-early 1994 when the effectiveness of the requirement that the national brewers release pubs from ties can be fully assessed.

Teleworking

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what support his Department has given in the past to encourage teleworking and telecottages; and if he will make a statement on his plans for any future policy initiatives in this area.

Mr. Sainsbury: Teleworking, telecottages and home-working have attracted widespread interest in the idea that information technology can enable people to work from remote rural locations.

The DTI has supported a number of research programmes studying the technology, management and human factors related to teleworking. As part of its own alternative working strategy the DTI has run a small project involving staff working from home.

EC (Exchange of Officials)

Mr. Ian Bruce: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the future participation of British officials such as environmental health and trading standards officers in the European action plan for the exchange of officials engaged in the enforcement of Community legislation required to build the single market as set out in the *Official Report*, column 269, of 20 November 1991.

Mr. Needham: The United Kingdom supports the proposal, which is expected to be agreed at the 14 May internal market council, for an exchange scheme between member states of officials responsible for enforcing internal market legislation. Exchanges, each of two months duration in principle, are due to start in 1993, with the aim of increasing co-operation and confidence between national administrations, helping to ensure that Community legislation is applied uniformly in member states. Exchanges between member states should rise to a total of some 500 a year during the five-year programme and United Kingdom employers in national, regional or local government and the private sector, will be encouraged to support such exchanges in both directions. Nominations for participation, incoming and outgoing, will be co-ordinated by the office of the Minister for the Civil Service.

Manufacturing Trade

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will give the deficit or surplus in manufacturing trade in volume terms and increase or decrease in value terms between the United States of America and *(a)* Britain, *(b)* Germany and *(c)* France for each year since 1985.

Mr. Needham: The available information is in the table. Data are not available for trade balances in volume terms.

USA's bilateral trade balance[1] in manufactured goods[2]

Balance with:		*Balance*	*Change in value terms on previous year*
		US$ billion	*US$ billion*
France	1985	−3·6	−1·1
	1986	−3·3	0·3
	1987	−3·4	−0·2
	1988	−3·3	0·2
	1989	−2·3	1·0
	1990	−0·5	1·8
Germany	1985	−13·0	−2·8
	1986	−16·7	−3·7
	1987	−17·9	−1·3
	1988	−15·1	2·8
	1989	−10·4	4·8
	1990	−12·0	−1·6
United Kingdom	1985	−1·3	−1·8
	1986	−3·2	−1·8
	1987	−2·0	1·2
	1988	0·0	2·0
	1989	2·0	2·0
	1990	2·8	0·9

Notes:
[1] Crude trade balance. Exports FOB less imports CIF, at current prices and exchange rates.
[2] Standard International Trade Classification sections 5-8.
Source: OECD Series C.

EC/EFTA Meeting

Mr. Flynn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the issues discussed and decisions taken at the joint meeting of the European Communities and the European Free Trade Association in Oporto on 1 to 2 May.

Mr. Needham: On 2 May 1992, the Community, its member states and the members of the European Free Association signed the European economic area agreement together with related bilateral agreements between the Community and EFTA on transit, agriculture and fisheries. The European economic area will extend the principles of the Community's single market to the EFTA countries, eliminating many barriers to trade between the Community and EFTA.

Nuclear Weapons (Iraq)

Mr. Flynn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what requests Her Majesty's Government have received from the United Nations Special Commission to Iraq for information on the involvement of British based or registered firms in the provision of nuclear equipment, or equipment that could assist in the production of nuclear weapons for Iraq.

Mr. Needham: No. However, the International Atomic Energy Agency has made a request for such information following the continuing work of its inspectors in Iraq.

Al Yamamah Defence Contract

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade on how many occasions officials of his Department or the Export Credits Guarantee Department had meetings with officials of the Defence Export Sales Organisation with regard to the Al Yamamah II defence contract.

Mr. Needham: Officials of the DTI and ECGD from time to time have meetings as necessary with officials of the Defence Export Sales Organisation concerning the Al Yamamah II defence project. To ascertain the precise number of such meetings would involve disproportionate cost.

Bank Takeovers

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he expects to be informed by the Office of Fair Trading of its views on the possible takeover of Midland bank plc by Lloyds bank plc; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The Director General of Fair Trading provides his advice to the President of the Board of Trade on all mergers qualifying for investigation under the Fair Trading Act 1973 as quickly as possible. It would not be appropriate to comment on when the director general's advice on the possible takeover of Midland Bank plc by Lloyds bank plc is likely to be received or when a decision on that advice can be expected in view of the market sensitive nature of that information.

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he expects to be informed by the European Commission of the Competition Directorate's views on the proposed takeover of Midland bank plc by the Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The proposed takeover of Midland bank plc by the Hong Kong and Shanghai bank was notified to the EC Commission under the European Community merger regulation on 23 April. The EC Commission has to announce its decision on whether to clear the merger or open a full-scale investigation into it by 26 May.

Mr. Whittingdale: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment he has made of the implications for consumer choice and competition within the banking system of a takeover of Midland bank by Lloyds bank; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The President of the Board of Trade will receive comprehensive advice from the Director General of Fair Trading on all aspects of the possible offer by Lloyds bank for Midland bank which may affect the public interest. It would not be appropriate for the President to reach a view on the implications for consumer choice and competition within the banking system of a merger of the two banks in advance of receiving the director general's advice.

PRIME MINISTER

Nuclear Testing

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Prime Minister what response Her Majesty's Government *(a)* have made to date and *(b)* intend to make, to the call made by the French President to halt nuclear testing.

The Prime Minister: The Government's policy on nuclear testing remains unchanged. The United Kingdom has a continuing requirement to sustain a minimum programme of nuclear tests to maintain the effectiveness and safety of our nuclear deterrent.

Engagements

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for 12 May.

The Prime Minister: This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House I shall be having further meetings later today.

Inner-city Programmes

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Prime Minister which inner-city programmes, currently the responsibility of Departments, other than the Environment Department, will be transferred to the proposed urban regeneration agency.

The Prime Minister: The responsibilities of the urban regeneration agency are being finalised. Its primary function will be to bring about the development of vacant and derelict land in urban areas and its responsibilities will reflect this.

Lockerbie Bombing

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister if he will discuss with the President of the United States the representations made to both of them by the lawyers representing the insurers of Pan American Airways in relation to the Lockerbie bombing; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 11 May 1992]:* I have received no such representations.

Mirror Group Pensioners

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Prime Minister what further recent representations he has received about the situation of pensioners of Mirror Group newspapers; what reply he is sending; what action he will be taking; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 11 May 1992]:* I have received a number of representations about the pensioners of Mirror Group newspapers and other Maxwell pension funds. Ministers are keeping in close

contact with the trustees of the Mirror Group pension schemes and other Maxwell pension funds who are attempting to resolve the ownership of assets and their return to funds. In addition, Ministers have met a number of groups representing the interests of those involved; the most recent meeting being on 6 May. As we stated in our manifesto, we are committed to reviewing the framework of law and regulation within which occupational pension schemes operate.

If pension funds are unable to protect pensioners' guaranteed minimum pensions, their state pensions will be increased as if they had never left the state earnings-related pension scheme. We have alerted social security offices to make sure that, if necessary, emergency provisions are put into effect to help anyone who needs support from the benefits system because of uncertainty as to their income.

DEFENCE

Al Yamamah Contracts

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when reviews or audits of brokerage or commission payments to purchasing agents under the Al Yamamah I and II defence contracts were carried out.

Mr. Aitken: My Department has not employed business agents in connection with Al-Yamamah contracts.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what reviews and audits are carried out into maintenance and service contracts forming part of the Al Yamamah defence contracts and by whom; and to whom do they report;

(2) who carried out the audit of payments cleared through the Al Yamamah I and II defence contracts; how often they reported; and to whom.

Mr. Aitken: All my Department's accounts are subject to the normal audit arrangements, the results of which are reported as appropriate. It is not the Government's practice to comment on detailed matters concerning individual defence export sales.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what audits have been carried out of payments made by Westland Helicopters Ltd. under the Al Yamamah defence contracts; who carried out those audits; and to whom the audit results were reported.

Mr. Aitken: Westland Helicopters Ltd. has no contracts under the Al-Yamamah programme.

Defence Export Sales Organisation

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will place copies of the internal audit manuals and guidelines used by the Defence Export Sales Organisation in the Library.

Mr. Aitken: The Defence Export Services Organisation is subject to internal audit by my Department's directorate of internal audit which works to the Government internal audit manual issued by the Treasury. This document is available in the Library of the House.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether there are internal audit teams on the staff of the Defence Export Sales Organisation or specifically allocated to the review of its activities.

Mr. Aitken: Internal audit of the Defence Export Services Organisation—DESO—is the responsibility of my Department's directorate of internal audit—DIA. There are no internal audit teams on the staff of the DESO, nor are any DIA staff specifically allocated to the review of the DESO's activities.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will place copies of the written guidance on the authorisation of payments by the Defence Export Sales Organisation in the Library.

Mr. Aitken: As an integral part of the Ministry of Defence, the Defence Export Services Organisation observes the financial procedures set out in "Government Accounting" in common with all Government Departments. This document is available in the Library of the House.

SCOTLAND

Bursaries

Mr. Kynoch: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he has completed his review of the bursaries scheme for non-advanced further education students.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: We have decided that, as proposed in the White Paper, "Access and Opportunity", the responsibility for bursaries for non-advanced further education students should remain with education authorities. The operation of the scheme will be monitored following the establishment of boards of management of further education colleges at 1 April 1993.

Fatal Accident Inquiries

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many fatal accident inquiries there have been in Scotland in each of the last 10 years for which information is available.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The number of fatal accident inquiries held in each of the last 10 years is as follows:

	Number
1982	166
1983	161
1984	164
1985	153
1986	154
1987	158
1988	162
1989	136
1990	124
1991	124

Procurator Fiscal Service

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the current establishment of the procurator fiscal service; how many vacancies there are; and in what grades.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I am advised by my noble and learned Friend the Lord Advocate that on 8 May 1992 there were 1,080·5 staff in post in the Procurator Fiscal Service. Vacancies currently being filled are 15 in

legal grades, three in administrative grades and 3·5 in typing grades. When these appointments have been made the establishment of the Procurator Fiscal Service will stand at 1,102.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Severe Hardship Payments

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many unemployed 16 to 17-year-olds received severe hardship payments during the most recent 12 month period for which figures are available *(a)* in England and Wales and *(b)* in the London borough of Hillingdon; if he has any proposals to change the mechanism for making such payments; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Burt: In the year ending March 1992 19,444 unemployed 16 and 17-year-olds in England and Wales received income support under the severe hardship provision. Information about the London borough of Hillingdon could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Last month, the Benefits Agency issued improved and comprehensive guidance to local offices on handling claims from 16 and 17-year-olds which includes a good practices guide. This should improve and streamline the delivery of benefits to 16 and 17-year-olds. We will be monitoring the situation closely.

Targeting Benefits

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make it his policy to target benefits on those who are less well off while maintaining the overall size of his Department's budget.

Mr. Burt: We will continue our policy to improve and modernise the social security system with sustained emphasis on those groups with the greatest need.

Ethnic Minorities

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when his Department last conducted a survey of the ethnic origin of its employees; when it next plans to do so; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Burt: The Department last conducted a full survey in June 1989 by means of a voluntary questionnaire. The data is routinely updated with information on new staff and leavers.

As part of our commitment to the civil service programme for action on race, the Department, including its executive agencies, has taken steps to improve the response rate to the survey. In February 1992, we completed a resurvey of recent entrants in some parts of the Department. We are considering further action as part of our 1992-93 equal opportunities action plans.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what steps he has taken to recruit members of ethnic minorities in top grades of employment at his Department.

Mr. Burt: The Recruitment and Assessment Services Agency undertakes the direct recruitment of senior grades to the Department on behalf of the civil service commissioners. They have taken various steps to aid the recruitment of members of ethnic minorities.

The Department of Social Security, as an equal opportunities employer, seeks to encourage the employment and career development of members of ethnic minorities.

Benefit (Training Places)

Mr. Simpson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what provision is made for benefit entitlement for young people who are unable to take up a training place because of the non-availability of places.

Mr. Burt: The Government remain committed to the guarantee of offering all 16 and 17-year-olds a youth training place. However, the most vulnerable groups of young people have entitlement to income support at all times. This includes couples with children, lone parents looking after a child, those people who are registered as blind, those incapable of work or YT because of disability, and carers. For those for whom a YT place cannot be found immediately, financial support is available as follows:

i. Parents of recent school leavers living at home can claim an extension of child benefit for up to 16 weeks. Those who are estranged from their families can claim income support during the same period.

ii. Income support is available under the severe hardship provision where a young person would otherwise suffer severe hardship because of the lack of financial support. This applies not only to the homeless, but also to those living independently and to those whose parents may have difficulty supporting them.

Income Support

Mr. Simpson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proportion of 16 to 18-year-olds *(a)* have entitlement to income support and *(b)* had an equivalent entitlement in 1983; and what these figures are or were as a percentage of all 16 to 18-year-olds.

Mr. Burt: Information is not available in the form requested. Entitlement to income support needs to be considered in the light of the Government's increased expenditure on youth training and provision of a greater number of training places. Young people on youth training have underlying entitlement to income support which is not paid in the overwhelming majority of cases because the training allowance is paid at a higher rate. The number of 16 and 17-year-olds on income support and youth training allowances in 1990, the latest year for which information is available, was 365,000, or 25·1 per cent. as opposed to 409,000, or 22·6 per cent. in 1983.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish a table showing, by districts, how many and what percentage of income support claimants with mortgage liabilities were in arrears with their mortgage payments, in total and by ranges of amounts of arrears and numbers of monthly instalments unpaid, at the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Burt: The information requested is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Maxwell Pension Funds

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what discussions have taken place between officials in his Department, representatives of the Maxwell pensioners, and the National Westminster bank, in response to the Social Security Committee's second report of Session 1991-92 on pension funds.

Miss Widdecombe: There have been no discussions involving all these parties. We continue to maintain a close interest in developments.

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement about the current position of all pensioners of all the former Maxwell companies; and what steps his Department is taking to help them.

Miss Widdecombe: The Department keeps in close contact with trustees of the Mirror Group and other Maxwell pension schemes who are attempting to resolve the ownership of assets and their return to pension funds. The Government secure pensions to the level of the guaranteed minimum pension, and no pensioner will be worse off than they would have been had they stayed in the state earnings-related pensions scheme. If any pensioner experiences financial difficulty and is unsure about his or her state benefit entitlement, he or she should get in touch with the local social security office, which has been alerted to the difficulties that these pensioners face.

Appeal Tribunals

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what fees are payable to members of social security appeal tribunals and disability appeal tribunals; and what are the reasons for any differences.

Mr. Scott: The chairmen of social security appeal tribunals and disability appeal tribunals receive fees of £230 per day. Members of SSATs receive no fees. The fees paid to the medical member of a DAT are £176·80 per day, while the other member receives a fee of £106 per day. Members of DATs receive fees in recognition of the very special expertise required to consider disability appeals.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will provide a breakdown of people recruited to serve on disability appeal tribunals on the grounds of personal or professional experience of disability by *(a)* number and percentage of people with disabilities and *(b)* number and percentage of people without disabilities.

Mr. Scott: Responsibility for the recruitment of people to serve as members of disability appeal tribunals lies with the president of the independent tribunal service, his honour Judge Holden, and the hon. Member may wish to contact his office direct to obtain this information.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to extend the provisions for disregarding tribunal fees in the benefit assessment of members in receipt of severe disablement allowance and invalidity benefit to people in receipt of income support, disability working allowance and invalid care allowance to ensure that people with disabilities and their carers in receipt of either of these benefits are able to serve on disability appeal tribunals without loss of benefit.

Mr. Scott: We have no such plans. The fees paid to disability appeal tribunal members are set at a high enough level—about £106 per day—to cover reasonably any reduction in the rate of income support, disability working allowance or invalid care allowance.

Indexation

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security on what date pensions and other benefits were indexed to prices instead of earnings; and whether this formula now applies to all benefits.

Miss Widdecombe: The Social Security Act 1980 introduced the principle that certain specified benefits should be uprated in line with prices rather than the higher of earnings or prices. The first uprating to follow this principle was in November 1980. The majority of contributory and disability benefits, including retirement pension, are statutorily uprated each year in line with prices. Most other benefits are reviewed annually in the same uprating.

Disability Handbook

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the names of organisations that have written to him concerning inaccurate or otherwise misleading information provided in the disability handbook, in particular with reference to the sections on HIV/AIDS and myalgic encephalomyelitis; and what plans he has to amend these or other sections of the handbook.

Mr. Scott: Since the disability handbook was published in February 1992, the Department has received correspondence from the Terrence Higgins Trust about the HIV/AIDS section of the handbook and from ME Action Campaign and Westcare about the myalgic encephalomyelitis section. The disability living allowance advisory board provides the Secretary of State with advice about the contents of the handbook, which is kept constantly under review. All representations received will be carefully considered.

British International Helicopters Ltd.

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement about the current position of existing and future pensioners of British International Helicopters; and what steps his Department is taking to help them.

Miss Widdecombe: British International Helicopters Ltd. current and future pensioners are members of the Mirror Group pension scheme, which is being wound up and is unlikely to have sufficient assets to meet all its liabilities. The Government are keeping in close touch with trustees of all Maxwell pension schemes. The Government secure pensions to the level of the guaranteed minimum pension, and no pensioners will be worse off than they would have been had they stayed in the state earnings-related pensions scheme. If any pensioner experiences financial difficulty and is unsure about his or her state benefit entitlement, he or she should get in touch with the local social security office, which has been alerted to the difficulties these pensioners face.

Disability Benefits

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what assessment has been made of how the Benefits Agency has handled the transition to the introduction of disability living allowance; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: Disability living allowance was introduced on 6 April 1992. Transition began in February 1992 and has been a major exercise because the benefit was introduced without phasing providing for claims to be taken to both DLA and the existing benefits—attendance allowance (AA) and mobility allowance (Mob A)—during the transitional period. During this period, claims to AA and Mob A continued at a very high rate and existing beneficiaries were contacted and invited to claim any extra benefit to which they might be entitled. Claims were also encouraged from wholly new claimants. From March 1992 claims for AA and Mob A began to be transferred from the central units in Blackpool to the disability benefit centres, which administer DLA regionally.

The transition exercise has been accompanied by a wide-ranging publicity campaign designed to promote the new benefit and to reassure existing beneficiaries. This high-profile approach has stimulated a high level of claims at a time when staff are still becoming familiar with the new benefit resulting in longer clearance times. The Benefits Agency is processing these claims as quickly as possible.

38. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will ensure that those in receipt of an incapacity benefit will not have their incapacity for work questioned on the ground of serving on a disability appeal tribunal.

Mr. Scott: Recent amendments to the invalidity benefit and severe disablement allowance regulations will ensure that beneficiaries of these two benefits will not have their incapacity for work questioned if they serve on a disability appeal tribunal for one day a week or less.

39. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when the BBC select series on the "The Way Ahead," will be resumed; and what further plans he has for publicising the new disability benefits over the next six months.

Mr. Scott: We shall be considering proposals for further publicity relating to disability living allowance and disability working allowance in the light of early findings from the monitoring of the introduction of the benefits. As part of this process, we shall decide, after negotiation with the BBC, when further material from the series "The Way Ahead" should be broadcast.

40. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will provide figures showing the total expenditure by his Department to date on *(a)* the disability working allowance and *(b)* the lower rate component, care and mobility, of the disability living allowance.

Mr. Scott: The information requested is not currently available.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what plans he has to carry out ongoing monitoring of the new disability benefits; if he will give details of what aspects of each benefit will be covered; and whether the results of any such monitoring will be published on a regular basis and made available to the public;

(2) what research projects into the operation of the new benefits for people with disabilities he is planning to undertake *(a)* within the Department of Social Security and *(b)* outside the Department of Social Security; and if he will provide details of the scope and timescale of such research and his Department's own plans for dissemination of the findings.

Mr. Scott: We shall be monitoring closely the operation of disability living allowance and disability working allowance in a number of ways. We shall collect regularly a wide range of statistical material for both benefits relating to claims, reviews and appeals. In addition, the chief adjudication officer will monitor decisions made by adjudication officers, and the disability living allowance advisory board will keep the disability handbook under close review. Information obtained from these activities will be readily available.

We hope also that we shall be able to continue the successful liaison with representatives of organisations who come into contact with, or represent, disabled people so that the causes of any difficulties which they identify in the operation of the new benefits are examined as quickly as possible.

We are considering what further research, either internal or external, is required in order to establish the extent to which the new benefits achieve the objectives set out in the Command Paper "The Way Ahead".

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make it his policy to ensure that Department of Social Security visiting officers will always be made available to disability living allowance applicants who require assistance with completing a self-assessment claim form and that claimants who cannot complete a form without such assistance will not be required to undergo medical examination solely on the ground that a visiting officer is not available.

Mr. Scott: The administration of disability living allowance is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and copies will be placed in the Library and the Public Information Office.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what evidence has been received by his Department of difficulties with respect to self-assessment claim forms for disability living allowance and disability working allowance either *(a)* by claimants or *(b)* adjudication officers; and whether he is planning to meet with officials from the Office of the Chief Adjudication Officer to consider the need to make any changes to the wording of claim forms to facilitate accurate and prompt decision-making.

Mr. Scott: We have received no evidence of difficulties but over the coming months we will be undertaking a review of the claim packs for both disability living allowance and attendance allowance, with a view to making improvements where necessary. As part of that review, officials will consult not only the central adjudication service but other interested parties, in

particular, organisations of and for disabled people. The disability working allowance self-assessment disability test form is primarily for use in renewal claims and has, therefore, not yet been used.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the number of applications received by his Department for the mobility component of the disability living allowance under the new provisions for people who are severely mentally impaired and display severe behavioural problems; and if he will provide a breakdown by *(a)* the number and percentage of these that resulted in an award, *(b)* the number and percentage that were refused and *(c)* the number and percentage refused, by grounds for refusal.

Mr. Scott: In general, claims for disability living allowance are made for the benefit as a whole, rather than for individual rates of components—although customers may choose to supply details about only one of the two components if they wish. An adjudication officer then determines whether there is entitlement to the benefit and, if so, at which rate or rates. Initial statistical returns indicate that of the claims for disability living allowance decided between 3 February and 30 April 1992 there were 31 awards of the higher rate mobility component on the grounds that the person was severely mentally impaired and displayed severe behavioural problems.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how much has been spent to date on publicising the new disability benefits; what measurable efficiency targets have been established by his Department; whether he plans to compare the success rates of disability living allowance and disability working allowance applications against such targets or in any other way to evaluate the effectiveness of the publicity; and whether a report will be published and made available to the public.

Mr. Scott: To date, the Department has spent £3·77 million, on press and television advertising, leaflets, and the BBC Select television programmes to promote the new disability benefits and the new rules for attendance allowance. Details of further expenditure—including the cost of direct mailings to health professionals and advisers, and of telephone response lines—are not yet available. All television and press advertising includes an evaluation of the coverage of the target audiences. In addition, we are currently conducting customary tracking research to evaluate the effectiveness of the publicity campaign. The results of that research will be used to help us target more effectively any future publicity. A copy of the report will be placed in the Library in due course. Early indications are that the advertising campaign has been highly successful, having generated 295,000 responses so far.

Claims (Processing Times)

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what is the Government's target for the average length of time to process claims for *(a)* mobility allowance, *(b)* attendance allowance, *(c)* attendance allowance on grounds of terminal illness, *(d)* disability living allowance and *(e)* disability living allowance including a claim for the highest rate of care component on grounds of terminal illness; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if sufficient adjudication officers have been employed during the last three months to handle claims for attendance allowance in order to meet the Government's targets for speed of processing of claims; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: The administration of benefits is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and copies will be placed in the Library and the Public Information Office.

Attendance Allowance

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) how many claims for attendance allowance on the ground of terminal illness were received in the first three months of 1992; how many of these claims are still outstanding; what was the average length of time taken to process successful claims; and if he will make a statement; (2) how many claims for attendance allowance were received in the first three months of 1992; how many of these claims are still outstanding; what was the average length of time taken to process successful claims; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: A total of 164,412 claims for attendance allowance were received in the first three months of this year. The number of these claims made on the ground of terminal illness is not available. On 1 May 1992 there were outstanding 119,930 ordinary attendance allowance claims and 2,428 claims on the grounds of terminal illness.

The information about average length of clearance times is not available in the form requested.

Child Benefit

Mr. Paul Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the value of child benefit for each year since 1979 *(a)* in cash terms and *(b)* uprated by average earnings.

Mr. Burt: The information requested is in the table:

Uprating date	*Rate of child benefit for eldest eligible child* £	*Rate of child benefit for each other child* £	*Rate for each child if uprated by earnings since April 1979*[1] £
April 1979	4·00	4·00	4·00
November 1980	4·75	4·75	5·35
November 1981	5·25	5·25	5·95
November 1982	5·85	5·85	6·45
November 1983	6·50	6·50	7·05
November 1984	6·85	6·85	7·40
November 1985	7·00	7·00	8·05
July 1986	7·10	7·10	8·50
April 1987	7·25	7·25	8·90
April 1988	7·25	7·25	9·60

Uprating date	*Rate of child benefit for eldest eligible child* £	*Rate of child benefit for each other child* £	*Rate for each child if uprated by earnings since April 1979*[1] £
April 1989	7·25	7·25	10·50
April 1990	7·25	7·25	11·50
April 1991	8·25	7·25	12·60
October 1991	9·25	7·50	13·05
April 1992	9·65	7·80	13·60

[1] Based on the average earnings index (whole economy) seasonally adjusted.

Mobility Allowance

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many claims for mobility allowance were received in the first three months of 1992; how many of these claims are still outstanding; what was the average length of time taken to process successful claims; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: In that period, a total of 56,171 claims were received. At the end of March 1992, there were 27,371 claims outstanding, although some of these would have been received prior to January 1992. The average length of time taken to process successful claims was 32·91 days.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 13 May 1992

PRIME MINISTER

Security Services

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Prime Minister whether he proposes to bring the operation of the Secret Intelligence Service and the Security Service under parliamentary scrutiny.

The Prime Minister: The security and intelligence services are all subject to close ministerial oversight, and Ministers are responsible to Parliament. There are now also commissioners for the Security Service and interception of communications who produce an annual report to Parliament. Those who have grievances have access to tribunals and sources of redress. There will be an opportunity for Parliament to debate such matters when legislation is brought forward.

Police Authority

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list the police authority for all the non-Home Office official police forces and/or constabularies.

The Prime Minister: A number of bodies have powers under legislation other than the Police Act 1964 to appoint persons having some of the powers of a constable. A full list of such organisations is not held centrally and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost. The larger forces include the British Transport police, the Ministry of Defence police, the Royal Parks constabulary and the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority constabulary. The performance of the duties and functions associated with police authorities normally rests with the Government department, local authority, or private company responsible for the constables concerned.

European Community

Mr. Temple-Morris: To ask the Prime Minister what priority, during the United Kingdom's approaching presidency of the European Community, he gives to making progress on creating a stable future for United Kingdom agriculture as opposed to other issues such as enlargement or EC institutional change.

The Prime Minister: The Government set out the right approach for the future of agriculture in the United Kingdom in the statement published last autumn, "Our Farming Future". This stressed the importance of the need for effective and substantial CAP reform. We shall pursue that objective during our presidency alongside our other objectives for the future of the Commmunity.

Carbon Dioxide Emissions

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make it his policy to call for a 30 per cent. reduction in levels of carbon dioxide emissions in the United Kingdom by the year 2000.

The Prime Minister: No. The United Nations intergovernmental negotiating committee on a framework convention on climate change unanimously adopted a draft convention on 9 May which would commit developed countries to adopt policies and measures aimed at returning emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases to their 1990 levels by the year 2000. The convention will be open for signature during the United Nations conference on environment and development next month.

Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster

Mr. David Martin: To ask the Prime Minister if he will set out the responsibilities of the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster.

The Prime Minister: In addition to his duties in relation to the Duchy, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster is responsible to me for the Office of the Minister for the Civil Service (OMCS), and the new Office of Science and Technology (OST).

He will be responsible for development of the citizens charter initiative ensuring sustained improvement in public services; this includes the charterline and the charter mark scheme, the toughening up of inspectorates, and the extension of contracting out and market testing. Above all, the Chancellor is responsible for ensuring that those who provide public services are practising the charter principles.

The Chancellor of the Duchy is also responsible for the "next steps" programme, improving efficiency and effectiveness in the civil service, and the market testing initiative; for advice on duties and standards in the civil service, the recruitment and development of civil servants, senior and public appointments, equal opportunities, occupational health and certain other non-financial aspects of personnel management. He will take responsibility for three executive agencies: the Civil Service College, the Recruitment and Assessment Services and the Occupational Health Service.

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster will be responsible for policy on open government, with a view to identifying areas of excessive secrecy and carrying forward moves towards greater openness. He will lead a review of specific statutory restrictions on the disclosure of information and the scope for greater access to personal records, while safeguarding personal privacy. The Chancellor of the Duchy will also be responsible for science and technology issues and for the Office of Science and Technology (OST). The OST will be responsible for the Advisory Council on Science and Technology (ACOST) and for the Advisory Board for the Research Councils (ABRC); for the Office of Science and Technology budget which includes the science budget; and also for the five research councils.

The Treasury will remain responsible for financial management, civil service pay, industrial relations, other pay related aspects of personnel management, relocation policies and civil service manpower statistics.

Departmental Ministers remain responsible for the progress of individual charters, management issues within their departments and the operation of their executive agencies.

National Heritage

Mr. David Martin: To ask the Prime Minister if he will set out the responsibilities of the Secretary of State for National Heritage.

The Prime Minister: The Secretary of State for National Heritage will be responsible for many of the central areas of our national life which enhance its quality or contribute significantly to our sense of national identity. These include the present functions of the Office of Arts and Libraries—the arts, museums, galleries and libraries—together with film and the export licensing of antiques, functions which are to be transferred from the Department of Trade and Industry. He will be responsible for broadcasting, notably the review of the BBC's charter, the press—including work on the recommendations of the Calcutt committee—and the safety of sports grounds, all duties to be transferred from the Home Office; sport, from the Department of Education and Science; tourism, from the Department of Employment; and heritage from the Department of the Environment. He will be responsible for the Historic Royal Palaces Agency.

The Secretary of State will be responsible for the proposed national lottery and, in consultation with the Home Secretary, the legislation required to create it. The Secretary of State will also be responsible for the Millennium Fund.

Cabinet Committees

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Prime Minister if he will retain Cabinet committees dealing with overall environmental issues and with energy efficiency in particular.

The Prime Minister: The full list of Ministerial Cabinet Committees, with their terms of reference and membership, will be published shortly.

CSCE Meeting

Mr. David Atkinson: To ask the Prime Minister when he expects to announce the membership of the United Kingdom delegation for the forthcoming meeting in Budapest of the new Assembly of Europe of the conference on security and co-operation in Europe; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The appointment of the delegation is a matter for discussion through the usual channels. I will make an announcement in due course.

Kurt Klebeck

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Prime Minister if Her Majesty's Government will now take steps to ask the German authorities to extradite Kurt Klebeck to the United Kingdom over Nazi crimes in the Channel islands.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 11 May 1992]:* Mr. Klebeck is a German national. We understand that Germany does not extradite its own nationals because of a prohibition in its constitution. We would co-operate fully with the German authorities if we were asked by them for assistance in connection with any possible proceedings in Germany.

War Crimes

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Prime Minister if he will now release in the public domain documents relating to the wartime Nazi occupation of the Channel Islands which remain classified; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 11 May 1992]:* Any records relating to the wartime Nazi occupation of the Channel Islands which remain closed to the public domain will be released at the appropriate time, under the criteria of the Public Records Acts of 1958 and 1967. I will however look into the matter raised by the hon. Member.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Electoral Areas

Mr. Peter Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will ask the Local Government Boundary Commissioner to consider the grouping of wards into district electoral areas in advance of the next local government election in 1993.

Mr. Hanley: When the present review of local government boundaries in Northern Ireland is complete, and the necessary consequential legislation has been made, a district electoral areas commissioner will be appointed under the District Electoral Areas Commissioner (Northern Ireland) Order 1984. It is intended that the commissioner should report in good time for his recommendations to be implemented before the 1993 local government elections.

Next Steps

Mr. Townend: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the progress of the next steps initiative in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Atkins: I am pleased to announce that, following a thorough feasibility study, the Government have decided that an executive agency should be set up within the Department of the Environment (Northern Ireland) to carry out the work of driver and vehicle licensing in Northern Ireland.

The detailed planning for agency status is already under way and the target launch date is 1 April 1993.

TRANSPORT

Traffic Calming

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what discretion local authorities have over the provisions of circular 3/90 and traffic advisory leaflet 2/90 to suit particular local conditions.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Circular 3/90 provides guidance to local highway authorities on the application of the Highways (Road Humps) Regulations 1990. The circular gives guidelines only to local authorities because they are required to meet the regulations. On 1 July 1992 we propose to commence a provision of the Road Traffic Act

1991 which will give the Department powers to authorise, on local roads, humps which do not comply with the regulations. We will shortly be advising local highway authorities, by means of a further circular, on how these powers will be exercised.

A13

Mr. William Powell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what improvements to the A13 between the North Circular road and Butcher row are currently being undertaken; at what cost; and when they will begin and be completed.

Mr. Norris: The present estimated cost of works (including any advance works) and construction dates are as follows:

Scheme	*Estimated works cost (£ million)*	*Planned start*	*Planned finish*
Butcher row junction	1	1993	1994
West India Dock road junction			
Interim	4	(Completed April 1992)	
Final	1	1993	1993
Cotton street-Blackwall tunnel junction (A102)	7	1993	1994
Ironbridge to Canning Town improvements	53	1994	1997
Prince Regent lane (A112) junction	36	1994	1996
East Ham Manor way (A117) junction	33	1994	1996

All schemes are subject to the availability of funds and the satisfactory completion of statutory procedures.

Tilbury and Southend Railway Line

Dr. Spink: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will agree a fixed timetable for the trains and infrastructure investments in the London, Tilbury and Southend line, or make this line the first target for privatisation.

Mr. Freeman: BR has just let a contract for the survey and design part of the £50 million resignalling project which they believe to be the key to improving reliability on the London, Tilbury and Southend line. BR is considering what the best option for replacing the rolling stock might be. I look forward to receiving its proposals.

The London, Tilbury and Southend line will be one of the candidates for franchising when the necessary legislation is in place.

Railway Services

Mr. Adley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement in the legislative proposals necessary to enable Her Majesty's Government to comply with European regulations on the operation of railway services in Britain.

Mr. Freeman: The Government propose to make regulations under the European Communities Act 1972 in order to implement EC directive 91/440 "On the Development of the Community's Railways".

Channel Tunnel Rail Link

Mr. Adley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what legislative steps he envisages, to enable SNCF to run trains on British Rail tracks after the opening of the channel tunnel.

Mr. Freeman: No new legislation is needed to enable SNCF to run rail services jointly with BR on BR tracks. The Government propose to make regulations under the European Communities Act 1972 in order to implement EC directive 91/440 "On the Development of the Community's Railways".

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what progress has been made on raising finance from the private sector for the channel tunnel rail link; if public moneys will be made available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: We have appointed Samuel Montagu to advise on private sector involvement, and it has had preliminary discussions with a number of organisations with a potential interest in funding and developing the link. But substantive consideration of funding issues is unlikely before the route has been refined.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans are being made for an international station at Stratford to serve the channel tunnel rail link; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: British Rail is undertaking detailed studies on the options for an international station at Stratford, and there will be consultation with the local authorities concerned before any plans are finalised.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if the London Channel Tunnel Group is to be represented on the Channel Tunnel Rail Link Forum; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: The local authorities directly affected by the proposed route of the channel tunnel rail link are represented on the forum individually, rather than through bodies such as the London Channel Tunnel Group.

London Underground

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he last travelled on the Northern line of the London underground; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: I last travelled on the Northern line on Saturday 9 May.

Bus Privatisation

Mr. David Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the possibility of collusion or monopoly power amongst the privatised bus companies due to concentration of market share.

Mr. Hamilton: I have been asked to reply.

The Director General of Fair Trading has a general duty to keep the provision of bus services under review, and powers to act in relation to possible abuse of monopoly power or anti-competitive practices. Any evidence of abuse of market position should be referred to the director general.

LORD CHANCELLOR

Mr. Kurt Klebeck

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary Lord Chancellor's Department if the Lord Chancellor will release records held in the public record offices relating to the conduct of Herr Kurt Klebeck in Alderney during the 1939-45 war; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Any records in the Public Records Office relating to the occupation of the Channel Islands during the second world war which have been closed for longer than 30 years, under the arrangements set out in paragraph 25 to 27 of the 1982 White Paper "Modern Public Records" (Cm 8531), will be released at the appropriate time. It has been the practice of successive Administrations not to reveal details of the contents of specific withheld records. Questions of access to withheld records are a matter for the department of origin.

Law of Privity

Mr. Couchman: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he plans to reform the principle of the law of privity as it affects commercial leasehold property; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Lord Chancellor is actively considering the report of the Law Commission "Landlord and Tenant Law: Privity of Contract and Estate" (Law Com. 174) which recommended modifications to the present law under which original parties to a lease normally remain liable to perform the covenants thereunder for the whole of the lease term, notwithstanding that they may have parted with all interest in the property. He hopes to be able to make an announcement about this report in the near future.

HOUSE OF COMMONS COMMISSION

Newspapers

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the hon. Member for Berwick upon Tweed, as representing the House of Commons Commission how many copies of *(a)* the London *Evening Standard* and *(b) The Sun* are purchased for the House each day.

Mr. Beith: I shall arrange for the hon. Member to be supplied with this information.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the hon. Member for Berwick upon Tweed, as representing the House of Commons Commission how much was spent on providing national and local newspapers for hon. Members and Officers in each of the last two years.

Mr. Beith: The total annual cost of newspapers supplied through the Serjeant at Arms Department and by the Library during the financial years 1990-91 and 1991-92 was £46,847 and £56,831, respectively.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Slovenia

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he intends to extend the know-how fund to the independent republic of Slovenia.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: This is under active consideration.

Moldova

Mr. David Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if any application for the establishment of diplomatic relations and request to benefit from the know-how fund has been received from the Republic of Moldova; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have had diplomatic relations with Moldova since 17 January. The Moldovan Government have asked about the possibility of support from the know-how fund. We have indicated that we would respond to specific requests for support for projects in Moldova, and have invited proposals. No applications have been received to date for projects in Moldova.

Diplomatic Relations

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list those countries represented at the United Nations with which the United Kingdom does not have diplomatic relations.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The United Kingdom has no diplomatic relations with the following members of the United Nations:

Bhutan
Democratic People's Republic of Korea
Iraq
Libya

Ceremonial Dress

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much has been spent by his Department in each of the last three years on the provision of ceremonial dress for ambassadors, high commissioners, governors and other diplomatic representatives overseas.

Mr. Goodlad: The figures are:

	£
1989-90	12,791
1990-91	13,151
1991-92	16,077

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much was spent by his Department on *(a)* bird feathers, *(b)* swords and *(c)* gold braid in each of the last three years.

Mr. Goodlad: The information requested is not readily available and can be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Governor of Hong Kong

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what will be the total cost of equipping the new Governor of Hong Kong with ceremonial dress; and what items are involved.

Mr. Goodlad: Mr. Patten, having consulted widely, does not propose to wear ceremonial dress.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what has been the total cost of administering the office of the Hong Kong Governor in each of the last three financial years; and what is the proposed budget for 1992-93.

Mr. Goodlad: This cost is borne by the Hong Kong Government.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list those facilities and allowances currently available to the office of Hong Kong Governor.

Mr. Goodlad: These are provided and financed by the Hong Kong Government.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much was spent on official hospitality by the Governor of Hong Kong in the last completed financial year.

Mr. Goodlad: This is the responsibility of the Hong Kong Government.

Protocol 17

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the declaration on protocol 17 to the treaty on European union which was agreed by European Community Foreign Ministers at Guimaraes on 1 and 2 May.

Mr. Garel-Jones: On 2 May, EC Foreign Ministers agreed the text of the following declaration on protocol 17 to the treaty on European union:

> The High Contracting Parties to the Treaty on European Union signed at Maastricht on the 7th day of February 1992.
> Having considered the terms of Protocol No. 17 to the said Treaty on European Union which is annexed to that Treaty and to the Treaties establishing the European Communities.
> Hereby give the following legal interpretation:
> that it was and is their intention that the Protocol shall not limit freedom to travel between member States or in accordance with conditions which may be laid down, in conformity with Community law, by Irish legislation to obtain or make available in Ireland information relating to services lawfully available in Member States.
> At the same time the High Contracting Parties solemnly declare that, in the event of a future constitutional amendment in Ireland which concerns the subject matter of Article 40.3.3 of the Constitution of Ireland and which does not conflict with the intention of the High Contracting Parties hereinbefore expressed, they will, following the entry into force of the Treaty on European Union be favourably disposed to amending the said Protocol so as to extend its application to such constitutional amendment if Ireland so requests.

Vietnamese Migrants

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Vietnamese migrants.

Mr. Goodlad: On 12 May the British, Hong Kong and Vietnamese Governments reached agreement on the second phase of the orderly repatriation programme, covering the repatriation from Hong Kong of Vietnamese illegal immigrants—that is, those who under the screening procedures agreed and monitored by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) have been found not to be refugees.

This second phase agreed in principle last October with Vietnam, covers those Vietnamese migrants who were already in Hong Kong on 29 October 1991 when the orderly repatriation programme was announced. Earlier arrangements covered those who arrived in Hong Kong after that date and those who, having already been repatriated voluntarily, returned to Hong Kong in the hope of collecting a further UNHCR reintegration allowance.

There are still 56,000 Vietnamese migrants in Hong Kong, the vast majority of whom will probably not qualify as refugees. Those who are screened out will be encouraged to return under the UNHCR scheme. We hope most will do so. But inevitably some will not. These will be returned under the orderly repatriation programme.

The orderly repatriation programme is based on the firm principles that nobody whom UNHCR believes to be a refugee will be returned and that no returning migrant will face persecution. The Vietnamese Government have reaffirmed their commitment not to persecute returnees and to facilitate access to them by UNHCR and others to ensure that this guarantee is respected.

Since 1988, more than 20,000 Vietnamese migrants have returned home from the region without a single substantiated case of persecution.

Angola

Mr. David Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the outcome of the investigation into the murder of the four British tourists in south-western Angola in January.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The Angolan Government investigation into the killings is still continuing. Our embassy in Luanda is closely monitoring progress.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Economic and Monetary Union

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the state of progress in each of the member states of the EC towards the criteria in the Maastricht treaty for economic and monetary union.

Mr. Nelson: The table shows the state of progress of EC member states with respect to the convergence criteria, as set out in article 109j of the Maastricht treaty, using the most recent and consistent data and forecasts available. Definitions are not, as yet, fully standardised for any of the indicators of convergence, and figures are therefore only indicative at this stage.

It should be emphasized that whether or not a member state is assessed to be eligible for stage 3 of EMU in the final analysis is a matter for ECOFIN judgment, acting on a recommendation from the Commission. The final decision of whether to move to stage 3 rests with Heads of State or Government. There is a presumption that these judgments will be guided by the four formal convergence

criteria, but there is no requirement that they should be strictly bound by them and other factors will be taken into account.

	Latest Inflation[1]	*Government deficit*[2]	*General government debt*[3]	*Long Term bond yield*[4]	*ERM narrow band*[5]
Belgium	2·7	−6·4	129·4	8·8	Yes
Denmark	2·6	−1·7	67·2	8·3	Yes
France	3·2	−1·5	47·2	8·9	Yes
West Germany	4·8	−3·2	46·2	8·1	Yes
Greece	18·3	−17·9	96·4	N/A	No
Ireland	3·7	−4·1	102·8	8·8	Yes
Italy	5·6	−9·9	101·2	11·5	Yes
Luxembourg	3·0	2·0	6·9	7·7	Yes
Netherlands	4·2	−4·4	78·4	8·5	Yes
Portugal	8·5	−5·4	64·7	13·5	No
Spain	6·9	−3·9	45·6	11·5	No
United Kingdom	4·0	−1·9	43·8	9·3	No

[1]March 1992; percentage change of consumer prices over previous 12 months. *Source:* OECD.
[2]1991 forecast for general government financial balance (as a percentage of GDP). *Source:* European Commission.
[3]1991 forecast for gross debt of general government (as a percentage of GDP). *Source:* European Commission.
[4]January 1992; yield on fixed interest government securities. *Source:* Eurostat.
[5]Membership of the narrow band of the ERM for at least two years, without devaluing on own initiative.

Central Bank

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he favours the establishment of an independent central bank.

Mr. Nelson: My right hon. Friend has no plans to establish an independent central bank. If at some future date the United Kingdom decided to move to stage 3 of European economic and monetary union, steps would have to be taken to ensure that the Bank of England, as part of the European system of central banks, would enjoy the degree of independence required by the treaty on European union.

Exchange Rates

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give the appreciation in the real exchange rate of *(a)* the United Kingdom, *(b)* West Germany and *(c)* France since (i) May 1979, (ii) May 1986, (iii) the date of United Kingdom entry to the exchange rate mechanism and (iv) January 1991.

Mr. Nelson: Measures of countries' real effective exchange rate indices are published monthly by the International Monetary Fund in "International Finance Statistics".

Interest Rates

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the real interest rates in *(a)* Germany and *(b)* Britain month by month since Britain's entry into the exchange rate mechanism.

Mr. Nelson: The following rates were calculated using three-month money market rates. The United Kingdom figures were deflated by the retail prices index excluding mortgage interest payments; the German rates were deflated by the consumer prices index excluding rent, a more comparable measure than headline CPI. Appropriate figures are only available as far as February 1992.

	Germany	*United Kingdom*
1990		
October	5·1	4·1
November	5·7	4·1
December	6·4	4·4
1991		
January	6·5	5·0
February	6·4	4·3
March	6·8	3·7
April	6·4	4·8
May	6·1	4·6
June	5·5	4·1
July	4·5	4·0
August	5·1	4·4
September	5·2	4·3
October	5·9	4·7
November	5·1	4·5
December	5·4	4·7
1992		
January	5·5	4·8
February	5·3	4·5

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give the level of real interest rates in January 1987, January 1989, January 1990 and every month since January 1991 to date.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 11 May 1992]:* The following figures have been calculated by deflating average three-month inter bank rates for each month by the retail-prices index excluding mortgage interest payments for the same month. Hence no figures are available after March 1992, the last month for which the RPI is available. The figures are percentages.

	Per cent.
January 1987	7·2
January 1989	7·2
January 1990	8·6
January 1991	5·1
February	4·3
March	3·7
April	4·9
May	4·4
June	4·6
July 1991	4·6

	Per cent.
August	4·4
September	4·4
October	4·6
November	4·5
December	4·7
January 1992	4·8
February	4·5
March	4·6

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the level of real interest rates in May 1987, May 1989, May 1991 and May 1992 in Japan, the United States of America and the United Kingdom, respectively.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 11 May 1992]:* The following figures were calculated using three-month market rates for each country. The United Kingdom figures were deflated using the retail prices index excluding mortgage interest payments; those for the United States and Japan used consumer prices indices with housing costs stripped out, to give a more comparable figure. Figures for May 1992 are not yet available.

	May 1987	*May 1989*	*May 1991*
Japan	4·1	1·9	4·4
USA	2·7	2·1	0·8
United Kingdom	4·8	6·8	6·5

Master of Business Administration Courses

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will bring forward proposals to allow grant tax relief to individuals on master of business administration courses on their fees and expenses on the same basis as that allowed to companies which pay such fees for employees.

Mr. Dorrell: We have no present plans to change the provisions governing tax relief for vocational training which were included in the Finance Act 1991.

Treaty of European Union

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the text of article 228B of the Maastricht treaty of European union referred to in article 73F; for what reasons it was left out; and what steps are being taken to publicise its terms before the article is enforced.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 11 May 1992]:* There is no article 228B in the Maastricht treaty on European union. Article 228a is referred to in article 73g of the treaty on European union as presented to Parliament by the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Cm 1934), and may be found on page 59.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Parole

Mr. Ian Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has any plans to review the criteria determining good conduct for the purposes of parole in Her Majesty's prisons.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: No. Prisoners' conduct is but one of many factors taken into account when the Parole Board considers the case for parole.

Mr. David Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his policy towards a system of parole for terminally ill prisoners.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Terminally ill prisoners are considered for parole in the same way as others. A prisoner's medical condition is one of the factors which the Parole Board considers in assessing suitability for parole. Under the exercise of the royal prerogative of mercy, terminally ill prisoners can be considered for release on compassionate grounds, prior to their eligibility for release on parole.

Public Houses

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received from the brewing industry, the trade unions and the Association of Chief Police Officers about the ramifications of the increasing number of so-called revolving door tenancies in public houses.

Mr. Charles Wardle: None.

Overseas Voters

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give the number of overseas voters registered to vote in each constituency in the United Kingdom and the number in each who actually voted.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to a question from the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) on 11 May 1992 at column *20*. Information on the number of proxies who voted on behalf of overseas electors is not collected centrally.

Constables (Swearing-in)

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has as to how many local authorities have sworn in constables other than under the Police Acts.

Mr. Charles Wardle: This information is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Prison Statistics

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list all the undertakings made to the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish about reducing the number of prisoners in police cells since April 1990, in Greater Manchester, indicating which have now been achieved, and if he will publish the number of prisoners in police cells in Greater Manchester for each month from April 1990 to April 1992.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The hon. Member has quite properly raised the problem of the shortage of prison accommodation in the Greater Manchester area on many occasions. In particular, I note that during the Consolidated Fund Bill debate on 14 March 1991, *Official Report*, column *1307*, it was explained to the hon. Member:

—The new Brinsford young offender institution and remand centre would come on stream in October, contributing 475 places. The establishment began taking inmates at the beginning of December. Unfortunately an inmate disturbance on 4 December damaged the accommodation and at present the establishment is holding only 323 remand prisoners.

—Action was in hand to create more space in Hindley remand centre by transferring to Stoke Heath young offenders awaiting trial. This action was then brought into effect and is continuing.

—We were working to bring into use 200 new places in Full Sutton prison. One of the wings was brought into use in the latter part of 1991. There is an industrial dispute on the staffing of the remand wing.

—A further 140 refurbished places in Manchester prison wold be handed over in May 1991 and would be brought on stream as quickly as possible. The accommodation was opened in November.

—Moorland young offender institution and remand centre was due to come on stream in July 1991. It opened in August 1991.

In a written answer on 26 April 1991 at columns *559-60*, my right hon. Friend the Member for Mitcham and Morden (Mrs. Rumbold) explained:

"apart from new accommodation in Full Sutton, (see above) a further 152 places would be available in Acklington. Because of an industrial dispute Acklington did not begin to increase its population until March 1992. It will shortly reach its full capacity of 676."

In addition to these changes, new prisons at Whitemoor, Belmarsh and Elmley opened in 1991-92. Changes of use were also effected in the Mount, Preston, Brockhill, Everthorpe and Hewell Grange in order to make a more effective response to population pressures.

In June 1990, my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Putney (Mr. Mellor) explained to the hon. Member that it was then thought that the police cells situation ought to be resolved by the end of that year. In written answers on 26 April and 3 June, my right hon. Friend the Member for Mitcham and Morden also explained that prison service assessments indicated that young men on remand should be cleared from police cells during May, and that there should be substantial inroads into the general problem in July onwards.

As the hon. Member is aware, during the summer and autumn of 1991 there was an unexpected increase in the prison population. In fact, by the end of that year the population was nearly 3,000 above the short-term projections for that period. This had the effect of filling all the new and refurbished accommodation which had been intended to provide relief to the Greater Manchester police cells prisoners and causing prisoners to be held in police cells throughout England and Wales. The population has remained at this high level and, as a result, the situation remains very serious. The need to deal with the problems of prisoners in police cells remains a matter of the highest priority.

The monthly figures for prisoners in Greater Manchester police cells who should be in prison are as follows:

	Number
1990	
April	219
May	343
June	321
July	284
August	329
September	281
October	246
November	268
December	206
1991	
January	249
February	256
March	247
April	178
May	207
June	212
July	217
August	256
September	196
October	246
November	249
December	162
1992	
January	211
February	217
March	250
April	231

Mr. Kurt Klebeck

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any proposals to institute proceedings against Mr. Kurt Klebeck arising from his service in the German armed forces of occupation in Alderney during the 1939-45 war; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General on 11 May 1992.

War Criminals

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if extradition arrangements currently in effect between the United Kingdom and Germany can be used to facilitate extradition of German nationals from Germany to be tried for crimes committed in the Channel Islands during the 1939-45 war; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: The terms of the extradition arrangement between the United Kingdom and Germany are contained in the European Convention on Extradition Order 1990, which extends to the Channel Islands. The application of the arrangements in Germany is a matter for the German authorities. I understand that Germany cannot extradite its own nationals because of prohibitions to that effect in their own constitutions.

Electoral Registers

Mr. Michael Spicer: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will amend the legislation regarding the compilation of electoral registers to allow errors made by council employees during the preparation of the lists to be corrected.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Provision is made in the Representation of the People Regulations 1986 for errors made during the compilation of the electors lists by the electoral registration officer to be corrected either before or after publication of the electoral register on 15 February.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how much was spent by his

Department in the last financial year on campaigns to secure greater electoral registration in *(a)* the United Kingdom and *(b)* overseas.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: A total of £627,000 was spent in England and Wales in 1991-92 on the annual advertising campaign to encourage people to register to vote. There was no advertising campaign in 1991-92 to encourage overseas electors to register, but £1,210 was spent on updating posters.

Expenditure on publicity in Scotland and Northern Ireland is the responsibility of my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Scotland and for Northern Ireland respectively.

WALES

Mental Illness

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) how many patients there are currently in mental handicap hospitals in Wales; how many he expects there to be on 1 January 1993, 1994 and 1995, respectively; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will make a statement on the progress of the transfer of patients in mental handicap hospitals in Wales to care in the community.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: On 31 March 1991 (the last available census report) there were 1,332 people with a mental handicap resident in specialist mental handicap hospitals and units in Wales. This compares with 2,089 residents on 5 April 1983, the year the all-Wales mental handicap strategy was launched. This represents a fall of over 36 per cent.

This has been made possible by the growth in new patterns of community based services, supported by earmarked payments from the Welsh Office. These total £41·5 million in 1992-93, an increase of over 20 per cent. on 1991-92. Of this record total, an additional £2 million has been earmarked to enable over 100 more people to be resettled into homes of their own.

The Secretary of State announced on 9 March his intention to relaunch the strategy from April 1993 for a further period of development. Resettlement from hospital care is one of a number of key priorities for development he highlighted in the "Framework for Development" document, a copy of which was sent to hon. Members representing Welsh constituencies and which is in the Library of the House. Actual numbers to be resettled will depend on the satisfactory development of new patterns of services to meet the assessed needs of individuals.

Local Government

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if it is his policy to replace the current structure of local government in Wales with unitary authorities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: I refer the hon. Gentleman to my statement to the House on 3 March 1992, *Official Report*, columns 171-72.

Village Halls

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list by district council area the communities which have benefited from the capital grants programme for village halls in each of the last 10 years.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The information is not available in this form. I shall write to the hon. Gentleman and place a copy of my letter in the Library of the House.

Welsh Development Agency

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many contracts for minor building works have been agreed by the Welsh Development Agency in each of the last three years; and on how many occasions *(a)* the contractors have failed to complete works in the agreed time and *(b)* the Welsh Development Agency has failed to pay the contractors in the agreed time.

Mr. David Hunt: This is an operational matter for the Welsh Development Agency, and I have arranged for the chief executive to write to the hon. Gentleman.

Environmental Impact Assessments

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many environmental impact assessments have been presented with the planning applications in each of the last three years; and what assessment has been made of their compliance with the European Community directive on environmental impact assessment.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The number of environmental statements accompanying planning applications in Wales notified to the Department in the three years since directive 85/337/EEC came into effect in July 1988 is:

	Number
July 1988—July 1989	4
July 1989—July 1990	14
July 1990—July 1991	27

It is the responsibility of the planning authority to which an environmental statement is submitted to consider its adequacy and whether it complies with the requirements of the Town and Country Planning (Assessment of Environmental Effects) Regulations 1988 which implement directive 85/337/EEC in respect of projects requiring planning permission. Where an application is the subject of an appeal or is called in, the responsibility transfers to the inspector or the Secretary of State. The regulations empower an authority, an inspector or the Secretary of State to require the applicant to provide further information as necessary.

Estuaries

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment he has made of the damage to estuaries over the last decade, its implications for estuarial flora and fauna, as well as adherence to international wildlife conventions; and whether he has any proposals for the protection and improvement of estuaries.

Sir Wyn Roberts: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment today.

Coastal Protection

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proposals he has to improve the protection of the coastline and offshore waters; and when he expects to implement them.

Sir Wyn Roberts: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment today.

Llwyncelyn Centre, Swansea

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what meetings have been arranged to discuss the future of the Llwyncelyn centre in Cockett, Swansea.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: None.

Orimulsion

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his policy towards environmental pollution in Wales caused by the burning of orimulsion; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Only one application has been made in Wales to use orimulsion fuel on a large-scale commercial basis. This relates to National Power's proposals to use the fuel at its Pembroke power station.

As required, National Power has made separate applications to the Department of Trade and Industry and Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution under the Electricity Act 1989 and the Environmental Protection Act 1990, respectively. These applications are now under consideration.

In advance of decisions by the relevant authorities, it would not be appropriate for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to comment on the proposals, especially in view of his statutory appellate role under the Environmental Protection Act. However, the hon. Gentleman can be assured that all the environmental implications of National Power's plans will be fully taken into account before final decisions are taken.

Hazardous Substances

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the implementation in Wales of the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 1998.

Mr. McLoughlin: I have been asked to reply.

The responsibility for the implementation of the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 1988 (COSHH) rests with industry.

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has committed substantial resources to promoting awareness and understanding of the regulations throughout Great Britain. It has produced a wide range of guidance material, given lectures, held seminars and made site visits to promote COSHH. HSE surveys show that over 80 per cent. of people in Great Britain work for companies aware of the regulations.

Where it has been necessary, enforcement action for breaches of the COSHH regulations in Wales has been initiated by the HSE.

An evaluation report on the effectiveness of the COSHH regulations in Great Britain will be considered by the Health and Safety Commission later in the year, with a view to its publication.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Orchestras

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what plans he has to discuss with the chairman of the Arts Council a further review of the funding of the four London symphony orchestras.

Mr. Key: None.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for National Heritage meets the chairman of the Arts Council of Great Britain frequently to discuss matters of common interest.

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what steps he has taken to ensure that the Arts Council consults in a timely manner the boards of the four London symphony orchestras about their funding arrangements.

Mr. Key: The funding of the London symphony orchestras is a matter for the Arts Council of Great Britain and is kept under regular review. Grant levels are announced by the council some four months before the start of the year to which they relate.

Buxton Museum

Mr. Hendry: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if his Department will investigate proposals by Derbyshire county council to mothball Buxton museum; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: Buxton museum and art gallery is funded by Derbyshire county council. I understand from my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment that the education committee of the county council has agreed to discuss with High Peak council the future of Buxton museum and art gallery. I understand that the East Midlands museums service has offered advice and guidance to the county council.

National Heritage Memorial Fund

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what was the level of funding made from the National Heritage memorial fund for the purposes of safeguarding landscape features and wildlife habitats in each of the last six years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: Grants made available by the trustees of the National Heritage memorial fund to assist in the acquisition, maintenance or preservation of land of scenic and/or scientific interest over the last six financial years were as follows:

	£ million
1986-87	1·429
1987-88	1·500
1988-89	1·157
1989-90	5·887

	£ million
1990-91	1·071
1991-92	1·940

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Tobacco

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will show the cost to *(a)* the EC and *(b)* Britain of subsidising tobacco growing within the EC in the most recent year for which figures are available.

Mr. Curry: The EC spent 1,330 mecu (about £927 million) on the CAP tobacco regime in 1991. As member states contribute to the EC budget as a whole, no meaningful breakdown can be made for their contributions to individual sectors of the budget.

Whaling

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what progress he is making in preparations for the humane killing workshop preceding the International Whaling Commission meeting in June; what initiatives he has taken and plans to take to ensure the protection of small cetaceans; what measures he is taking to prevent the resumption of commercial whaling; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: Prior to the next meeting of the International Whaling Commission and at the request of the United Kingdom, a special workshop of experts will be held on 20 to 22 June under the independent chairmanship of Professor Sir Richard Harrison FRS to review all aspects of the methods used to take and kill whales. The agenda for the next IWC meeting will be a full one and the Government will continue to work hard for the conservation and protection of whales and other cetaceans. The need to ensure that there is clear scientific advice that whale stock can be maintained at healthy levels, that there is a revised and effective procedure in place for managing stocks and that the methods used to take whales are humane will remain paramount.

Ethnic Minorities

Mr. Janner: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many and what percentage of officers in grades 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7, respectively, and overall in his Ministry are members of ethnic minorities.

Mr. Curry: The information requested is set out below. Ethnic origin figures as at 1 April 1991 derive from a voluntary questionnaire completed by 92·2 per cent. of staff.

By grade and equivalent	*Ethnic minority respondents to ethnic origin questionnaire*	*Ethnic minority respondents as percentage of total respondents*
1	—	—
2	—	—
3	—	—
4	—	—
5	1	1·0
6	1	0·7
7	10	1·1
All staff	416	4·5

Figures relate to non-industrial staff in post in the Ministry, including its agencies, as at 1 April 1991.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when his Ministry last conducted a survey of the ethnic origin of its employees; when it next plans to do so; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: The Department completed its survey of the ethnic origin of staff in 1987 and keeps this up to date with information on new staff and leavers. Over 92 per cent. of staff have volunteered information on their ethnic origin. The Department is fully committed to the programme for action to achieve equality of opportunity in the civil service for people of ethnic minority origin.

Meat

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans he has to ensure that consumers in the United Kingdom are made fully aware of the European Community health mark labelling scheme for meat.

Mr. Soames: All meat which receives either the EC or the national health mark is fit for human consumption. The health mark operates as a control measure in the chain for slaughterer to retailer. There is no requirement in EC or United Kingdom legislation for it to be displayed at the point of sale to the final consumer. Consumers can be confident that all meat produced in the United Kingdom is inspected to ensure that it has been produced in accordance with hygiene requirements and is fit to eat.

Mr. Michael Alison: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he intends to create a national meat hygiene service.

Mr. Gummer: As I announced on 9 March 1992, a national meat hygiene service is to be established as an agency of my Department. The timing of the transfer of responsibility for fresh meat hygiene enforcement from local authorities to the new agency will depend upon parliamentary time being available for the necessary primary legislation. Detailed planning for the new agency has begun, and interested organisations will be kept informed of progress and will be consulted as appropriate.

Fishery Inspections

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether fishing boats are required to carry a ladder to facilitate inspection by fisheries protection personnel; whether there is a directive by the European Commission about the provision of ladders on fishing boats; and in which European Community countries the provision of a ladder on a boat is a legal requirement.

Mr. Curry: Commission regulation 1382/87 requires the provision of boarding ladders on fishing vessels to

facilitate inspection by fisheries protection personnel. The regulation applies to vessels of all member states, and the Government are currently taking steps to incorporate the requirement into domestic legislation.

ENVIRONMENT

Bathing Waters

8. **Mr. Mans:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many bathing waters were designated for the purposes of the 1975 European Community bathing waters directive by *(a)* 1979, *(b)* 1985 and *(c)* 1990.

Mr. Maclean: The number of United Kingdom bathing waters identified as within the scope of the bathing waters directive was 27 in 1979 and 1985, and 446 in 1990.

Derelict Land

12. **Mr. Hargreaves:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals he has for tackling the problem of vacant and derelict land.

Mr. Redwood: I propose to establish an urban regeneration agency with powers to reclaim vacant, derelict and underused land in urban areas. It will work in partnership with local authorities and the private sector wherever possible. The agency will be supported in its task by regulations which came into force this February requiring local authorities to maintain and publish registers of their unused and vacant land.

Housing, Hackney

15. **Ms. Abbott:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he next plans to visit the London borough of Hackney to discuss housing.

Sir George Young: My right hon. Friend has no plans to visit Hackney at present.

Protection Proposals

18. **Mr. Jon Owen Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to achieve an integrated approach to environmental protection and enforcement of relevant environmental legislation in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Maclean: The Government intend to create environment agencies for England, Wales and Scotland at the earliest legislative opportunity, in line with our manifesto commitments. Meanwhile we have significantly strengthened existing environmental protection requirements, for example, through the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

Water Pollution

19. **Mr. Lord:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to further reduce pollution in rivers and seas; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: The 1990 river quality survey published by the National Rivers Authority shows that around 90 per cent. of river length in England and Wales is of good or fair quality. The system of statutory water quality objectives which we will be introducing later this year will ensure that a real and sustained improvement in the quality of inland and coastal waters is achieved.

Estate Action

20. **Mr. Streeter:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the level of funding for the estate action programme in 1989-90; and what is the expected level of funding for 1992-93.

Mr. Baldry: The funding available for 1989-90 was £190 million. For 1992-93 it has been increased substantially to £364 million and is planned to rise to £423 million by 1994-95, focusing on the most run-down estates.

Recycling

21. **Ms. Primarolo:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on his Department's plans to fund comprehensive recycling schemes in every local authority.

Mr. Maclean: I allocated £15 million of supplementary credit approvals to English local authorities on 27 April for recycling investment. That figure, which is a 25 per cent. increase on last year, included £185,000 for Bristol.

However, there is no point in setting up comprehensive recycling collection schemes if there is no market for the materials collected. The Government have commissioned a major study into the use of economic instruments to promote recycling. Once we have that report, we will be in a better position to decide whether further measures are necessary to promote recycling, beyond the extensive range of measures already introduced.

29. **Mr. Burns:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals he has to encourage recycling in Chelmsford.

Mr. Maclean: The Government have taken a wide range of measures to promote recycling throughout the country. Recent measures which will encourage recycling in Chelmsford include the introduction of the recycling credits scheme and the allocation of £12,000 in supplementary credit approvals to Chelmsford borough council in 1992-93 to fund more recycling sites in the borough.

Noise

22. **Mr. Adley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he intends to take to reduce noise; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: My Department commissioned an independent review of noise control policy in 1990 and has already taken action to implement and progress over half the recommendations made in the report.

Local Government Finance

23. **Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will explain the method by which standard spending assessments for local authority social services are calculated.

Mr. Squire: The method is set out in the revenue support grant distribution report, which is available in the Library.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals he has for the reform of the standard spending assessments in the light of the Audit Commission's report.

Mr. Squire: Standard spending assessments (SSAs) are based on extensive analysis, research and continuing discussions with local authority representatives. The Government are not proposing any major changes to SSAs although data from the 1991 census will be incorporated as soon as possible after they become available.

The Audit Commission is in the early stages of a study of standard spending assessments, but it has published no recent report on the subject. We shall, of course, consider any recommendations which the Commission may eventually make.

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received from the Federation of Master Builders about the release of local authority capital receipts for re-investment; and what was his response.

Mr. Redwood: My Department has received a copy of a press release from the Federation of Master Builders seeking changes in the rules on the use of local authority capital receipts. Local authorities may currently spend 25 per cent. of their capital receipts from the sale of council houses, and 50 per cent. of receipts from most other sources. We have no plans to change these percentages.

County Hall

24. **Ms. Hoey:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to meet the London residuary body to discuss county hall.

Mr. Redwood: I have no immediate plans to meet the London residuary body.

30. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received in respect of the future of county hall and Battersea power station.

Sir George Young: I have received a number of representations on the future of county hall, particularly in the light of the offer made for the site by the London School of Economics. I have received no representations in respect of Battersea power station.

Right-to-repair Scheme

25. **Mr. Evennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals he has for improving the right-to-repair scheme for council tenants.

Sir George Young: The citizens charter proposed a new right-to-repair scheme to replace the existing scheme and provide local authority tenants with a simpler, stronger right to repair for the most urgent types of minor repairs affecting health, safety or crime prevention. The Government will bring forward legislation later this Session to give effect to it. A first round of consultation has been completed and there will be a further round of consultation in due course on the details.

Housing Defects Act 1984

26. **Mr. Corbett:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to review the scope of the Housing Defects Act 1984.

Mr. Baldry: The housing defects scheme of assistance was the subject of an efficiency scrutiny report published in November 1991. We have no plans to carry out any further review of the legislation.

Poll Tax

27. **Mr. Canavan:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the total cost to date of introducing, administering and collecting the poll tax, including the various Government-initiated relief schemes.

Mr. Redwood: The cost of preparing for, administering and collecting the community charge in England up to 1 April 1992 has been about £1·2 billion. Government relief schemes have reduced the burden of local domestic taxation to 15 per cent. of local government spending and have not added to overall public expenditure.

Council Tenants

28. **Mr. Patrick Thompson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals he has for offering council tenants an opportunity to take a stake in the home in which they live.

Sir George Young: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer that I gave earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Gloucester (Mr. French).

Homelessness

31. **Ms. Lynne:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to combat homelessness in the regions.

Mr. Baldry: The Government are very concerned about homelessness wherever it occurs, and the aim to reduce homelessness underlies all our housing policies.

Urban Regeneration Agency

32. **Mr. Mudie:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what consultations he has had with interested bodies with regard to the establishment of the urban regeneration agency.

Mr. Redwood: The Department will consult interested bodies on the proposals to establish an urban regeneration agency.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what procedures will be established to enable Parliament to monitor and seek information on the activities of the proposed urban regeneration agency; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: The urban regeneration agency will be a sponsored body working under the guidance of the Secretary of State and reporting direct to him. It is therefore appropriate for him to be accountable to Parliament for the agency.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) when he envisages the proposed urban regeneration agency will be established; and what will be its annual budget for its first three years of operation;

(2) whether responsibility for *(a)* city grant, *(b)* urban development corporations, *(c)* enterprise zones, *(d)* land

registers, *(e)* task forces, *(f)* derelict land grant, *(g)* city action teams, *(h)* urban programme, *(i)* city challenge and *(j)* simplified planning zones will be transferred to the proposed urban regeneration agency.

Mr. Redwood: These matters are being finalised. The primary function of the agency will, however, be to bring about the development of vacant and derelict land in urban areas and its responsibilities will reflect this.

Crown Immunity

33. **Mr. Illsley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has any proposals to streamline the operation of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 in relation to properties which formerly enjoyed Crown immunity.

Mr. Maclean: No, Sir. Under the Environmental Protection Act, properties which formerly enjoyed Crown immunity are subject to the same administrative arrangements as any other property. There is no need to streamline them.

Sea Defence

34. **Mr. Ian Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the increase of sea defence responsibilities by the National Rivers Authority.

Mr. Maclean: The Environment Committee of the House of Commons for the Session 1991-92 has issued a report on coastal zone protection and planning. This includes recommendations for the reorganisation of responsibilities for coast protection and sea defence. The Government will respond to that report in due course.

Construction Industry

35. **Sir Michael Neubert:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his assessment of the short and medium-term prospects for the construction industry.

Mr. Baldry: The signs of a return to steady sustainable growth are already here: inflation is down, interest rates are down, business confidence is growing and productivity is up. The construction industry will play a significant role in the country's growing prosperity.

Travellers

36. **Mr. Dunn:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has any plans to change planning law to introduce penalties for the unlawful occupation of public and private land by traveller families; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: From 2 January this year we increased tenfold the maximum summary penalty on conviction for those contravening an enforcement notice or stop notice, from £2,000 to £20,000. There is no upper limit on the penalty on conviction on indictment. We have also strengthened the enforcement and stop notice provisions. We do not think it is appropriate, in the absence of enforcement action by the planning authority, to make unauthorised development itself a criminal offence.

Mr. Ian Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to tackle the problem of illegal camping by gypsies and other travellers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: The Government are firmly committed to addressing the nuisance caused to local communities and local authorities by gipsies' and other travellers' camping illegally; we are committed to reviewing the operation of the Caravan Sites Act 1968, and hope to publish our proposals shortly.

Planning Applications

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will introduce legislation requiring the submission of an independent environmental impact report before local planning authorities, or his Department, determine their decision in respect of planning applications for the extraction of aggregates and other minerals and the disposal, by tipping, of household waste and other rubbish.

Mr. Baldry: The Town and Country Planning (Assessment of Environmental Effects) Regulations 1988, which implemented directive 85/337/EEC, require planning applications for the extraction of sand and gravel and other minerals and for the disposal of household and other non-toxic waste to be accompanied by an environmental statement if the proposed development is likely to have significant effects on the environment by virtue of factors such as its nature, size or location. In such cases, planning permission may not be granted unless the environmental statement and representations on it from statutory consultees and the public have first been taken into consideration.

Rental Housing

37. **Mr. David Martin:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has for further encouraging the private rented sector to provide homes to rent for families.

Sir George Young: The deregulatory measures in the Housing Act 1988 are already halting the decline in the private rented sector.

Further initiatives to encourage the private rented sector include extending nationwide the housing associations as managing agents scheme, £25 million to bring vacant flats over shops back into use, and giving tax relief to home owners who rent a room to lodgers.

Local Government Reorganisation

38. **Mr. Channon:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his policy on the reorganisation of local government.

Mr. Redwood: I refer the right hon. Member to the reply my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State gave earlier to my hon. Friends the Members for Amber Valley (Mr. Oppenheim) and for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie).

Eco-labelling

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what publicity his Department has carried out and plans to carry out to publicise the EC eco-label to *(a)* those companies whose products may qualify and *(b)* consumers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: Responsibility for eco-labelling is shared between my Department and the Department of Trade

and Industry. The Department of Trade and Industry has already taken steps to publicise the scheme widely to industry through newsletters, articles and seminars and this will continue. As we move towards the autumn when the scheme is due to come into operation we will increasingly target publicity to raise awareness among consumers.

Dumps (Methane Gas)

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list, by local authority area, the locations of waste dumps in England and Wales which are known to produce methane gas; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: Current information on the location of landfill sites known to produce methane gas is not held centrally. A report on this matter was published by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution in April 1991, compiled from information supplied by local authorities. The statistics contained in this report, even though of a general nature, are now recognised as unreliable. Accurate information should be available from local authorities with which the responsibility rests.

Housing (Disrepair)

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give *(a)* the latest details of the number of properties in Stoke-on-Trent, North constituency classified as in serious disrepair, and *(b)* that figure as a percentage of the entire housing stock in that constituency.

Mr. Baldry: The information is not available for constituency areas. Local authorities report estimates of the number of unfit dwellings, and dwellings which are not unfit but in need of renovation in their annual housing investment programme returns (HIP1). The information as at 1 April 1991 for Stoke-on-Trent city council and the borough of Newcastle-under-Lyme, which both include part of the Stoke-on-Trent, North constituency within their boundaries is as follows:

	Unfit dwellings	*As a percentage of stock*	*Fit but needing renovation*	*As a percentage of stock*
Stoke-on-Trent city council	21,348	21·0	46,460	45·7
Borough of Newcastle-under-Lyme	2,402	4·9	6,000	12·1

Note: Private sector dwellings (the majority) are only counted as "Fit but needing renovation" if the owner is considered likely to qualify for a discretionary renovation grant.

Ultraviolet Radiation

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what research is being undertaken on the possible effects of enhanced ultraviolet radiation due to stratospheric ozone depletion upon materials which are subject to outdoor exposure; whether he has evaluated the possible costs of increased exposure on such materials; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: The Building Research Establishment is investigating the effects of ultraviolet radiation on plastic building material, polymeric roofing membranes, building sealants and paints, as part of its research on the deterioration of these materials caused by natural weathering. This research involves development of accelerated weathering tests, including exposure to enhanced levels of ultraviolet radiation. However, it is not presently possible to estimate the costs of exposure of building materials to ultraviolet radiation alone.

Ferro Alloys Ltd.

Mr. Hendry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what indications he has received from Ferro Alloys Ltd. regarding the company's planned actions to reduce emissions from its factory in Glossop, following his Department's instructions.

Mr. Maclean: An improvement notice under the Health and Safety at Work, etc. Act 1974 served on Ferro Alloys and Metals Ltd., Glossop, requires it to reduce the emission of sulphur dioxide to 113kg/hr from its smelting (roasting) process by 31 August 1992. The works have indicated orally that they intend to reduce throughput to comply with this notice.

High Efficiency Lighting

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to issue guidelines to the public and private sectors concerning the use of high efficiency lighting.

Mr. Maclean: The Department's Energy Efficiency Office already provides guidance on energy efficient lighting to domestic consumers, the public sector and industry and commerce through its best practice programme. The current "Helping the Earth at Home" domestic campaign also describes the merits of energy efficient lighting in its literature.

Carbon Dioxide

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what new policies have been, or are to be, introduced to implement the Government's commitment to bring forward the date of carbon dioxide stabilisation for 2005.

Mr. Maclean: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given today to my hon. Friend the Member for Fulham (Mr. Carrington).

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what submission he has made to the Commission of the European Communities on his strategy for reducing carbon dioxide emissions.

Mr. Maclean: A copy of the Environment White Paper "This Common Inheritance", which set out the United Kingdom's strategy on carbon dioxide emissions and a first tranche of measures to limit emissions, was sent to the Commission last year. My right hon. Friend expects to send the Commission an update on this strategy shortly.

Planning Law

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he proposes to review the laws on planning.

Sir George Young: Substantial improvements to the planning system were made in the Planning and Compensation Act 1991. I have no plans at present for any further general review of planning law.

Building Insulation

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to improve standards of insulation in new houses, other new buildings and existing houses and other existing buildings.

Mr. Baldry: The requirements of the building regulations for the conservation of fuel and power include provisions for the insulation of both new houses and other new buildings. These requirements were made more stringent in 1990. The Government are at present reviewing them to see how they might be further strengthened.

The Government will continue to make substantial capital sums available for improving the insulation of existing homes. Measures are undertaken through repair and improvement programmes to the local authority housing stock, the green house programme, the home energy efficiency scheme, house renovation grants and minor works assistance and the Housing Corporation's rehabilitation programme.

The Energy Efficiency Office through its best practice programme and energy management assistance scheme promotes improvements in the energy efficiency performance of other existing buildings.

Breaches of EC Legislation

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement listing the alleged breaches of European Community environment legislation brought to the Government's attention since 1984 to the present time and the current status of each of the alleged breaches.

Mr. Maclean: I will write to the hon. Member as the information requested will take a little time to assemble.

Environmental Impact Assessments

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many environmental impact assessments have been presented with planning applications in each of the last three years; and what assessment has been made of their compliance with the EC directive on environmental impact assessment.

Mr. Baldry: The number of environmental statements accompanying planning applications in England notified to my Department in the three years since directive 85/337/EEC came into effect in July 1988 is:

	Number
July 1988-July 1989	51
July 1989-July 1990	133
July 1990-July 1991	147

It is the responsibility of the planning authority to which an environmental statement is submitted to consider its adequacy and whether it complies with the requirements of the Town and Country Planning (Assessment of Environmental Effects) Regulations 1988 which implement directive 85/337/EEC in respect of projects requiring planning permission. Where an application is the subject of an appeal or is called in, the responsibility transfers to the inspector or the Secretary of State. The regulations empower an authority, an inspector or the Secretary of State to require the applicant to provide such further information as may be specified.

Secure Car Service

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those Government Ministers who have a car allocated to them under the secure car scheme.

Mr. Baldry: All Ministers are eligible for a car and driver from the Government car scheme.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the total cost of providing the secure car service in each of the last two financial years; and how many vehicles were involved.

Mr. Baldry: The total costs of providing the GCS ministerial and pool fleet for the two years in question were:

	£ million
1990-91	6·1
1991-92	6·6

The fleet numbered 174 vehicles in 1990-91 and 176 vehicles in 1991-92.

Brick Industry

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any proposals for the assistance of the brick manufacturing industry in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: The brick manufacturing industry will benefit from the general recovery in the economy, the signs of which are already here, and play a significant role in the construction industry's future growth.

Genetically Modified Organisms

Dr. Twinn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will make a statement on the proposed regulations to implement the two EC directives on contained uses and deliberate release of genetically modified organisms.

Mr. Maclean: The responses to the consultation paper and draft regulations which were issued in October 1991 raised several issues of clarification on the meaning of the requirements for those needing to comply with them. Officials of the Department are currently considering with the Health and Safety Executive how best to clarify and improve aspects of the draft regulations. The revised regulations will be delayed therefore beyond the target date of May but will be issued as soon as possible thereafter.

Radon

Dr. Twinn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when the results of the surveys of radon in homes in England will be published; and what new information they will provide.

Mr. Maclean: The National Radiological Protection Board (NRPB) has today published a report, "Radon in Dwellings in England", summarising the results of the radon surveys that it has carried out in England, principally under contract to the Department of the Environment, up to the end of 1991.

Copies have been placed in the Library, and have been distributed to local authorities in the areas most affected.

I welcome the report, which shows how far we have already progressed towards the target set in a recommendation of the report on indoor pollution by the Select Committee on the Environment during the last Parliament. The recommendation, which was accepted in principle, was that the Government should commit themselves to ensuring the identification of the majority of homes above the radon action level by the year 2000.

NRPB now has valid measurements for the radon levels in about 92,000 homes, which are presented in summary form in the report. About 12,000 results are above the Government's action level. All householders have been informed in confidence of their individual results. They have received copies of the Department's booklet, "The Householders' Guide to Radon", which explains how radon concentrations in homes may be reduced quite simply, and gives addresses and telephone numbers to contact for further help. We advise everyone who knows that the radon level is above the action level to take remedial action to reduce the risks of long-term exposure. I urge them to do so, if they have not already taken action.

The largest proportion of measurements were made in response to the Government's publicity campaign in Cornwall and Devon, and over 11,000 of the homes that exceed the action level are in those counties. Measurements are thus concentrated in the areas where indoor radon levels are known to be high, and do not reflect the overall national picture. The pattern of results is in good agreement with the predictions of the NRPB, that about 100,000 homes in the United Kingdom will have elevated radon levels, with the majority, about 60,000, in Cornwall and Devon.

Waste Management

Dr. Twinn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he intends to publish a revised edition of "Waste Management Paper No. 1: A Review of Options"; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: The second edition of "Waste Management Paper No. 1" was published on 12 May. This follows public consultation on a draft of the revised paper.

The paper provides general guidance on a range of methods of treatment and disposal of controlled waste. It gives an overview of waste management issues and includes suggestions on evaluating the options. Copies are being sent to local authorities.

Energy Saving Trust

Mr. Carrington: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress has been made in establishing an energy saving trust with British Gas and the regional electricity companies.

Mr. Howard: The Prime Minister has announced that, as a contribution to the international response to the threat of climate change, the United Kingdom is prepared if other countries take similar action to set itself the demanding target of returning its CO_2 emissions to 1990 levels by the year 2000. The Government are already putting action in hand to limit emissions.

The Government, British Gas, OFGAS and 11 of the regional electricity companies in England and Wales have today become partners in an important initiative to save energy and so protect the environment.

They have agreed to establish an independent Energy Saving Trust in the course of the year. The trust will develop, propose and manage programmes to promote the energy efficient use of energy. Where it is more cost-effective, the trust will sub-contract the administration of these programmes to other agencies.

British Gas has agreed to finance schemes run by the trust to promote the efficient use of gas. Where approved by OFGAS, the costs of these programmes may be recovered from British Gas's tariff customers through an "E factor" added to the formula that controls British Gas's average tariff price.

The three initial pilot schemes being proposed by British Gas are intended to finance improvements in the efficiency with which gas is used in low income households; provide incentives and advice for those replacing their heating systems so as to encourage the maximum cost-effective improvement in the efficiency with which they use gas; and stimulate investment in small scale or residential applications of combined heat and power such as schemes in the domestic and commercial sector.

It is envisaged that other schemes will be devised to complement the initial three. Since the first schemes will be pilot projects, the costs of the programme in the first year are unlikely to exceed £6 million, but the level of expenditure can be expected to rise in subsequent years as further schemes are developed and allowed by OFGAS.

The Government will be inviting the trust to make proposals for a pilot scheme of local energy efficiency advice centres to provide domestic and small business consumers with the information they will need to respond effectively to these schemes and to Government and other programmes that promote the efficient use of energy. The pilot scheme would be designed whether such centres would be cost-effective.

Seeboard, South Western Electricity, London Electricity, East Midlands Electricity, Southern Electric, Northern Electric, South Wales Electricity, Midlands Electricity, Manweb, Eastern Electricity and Yorkshire Electricity have all agreed in principle to finance the trust to run schemes to promote the efficient use of electricity, provided the trust can develop acceptable proposals and suitable arrangements for funding can be agreed. Possible areas could include pilot schemes intended to develop the use of heat pump technology to reduce heating costs; and improve the level of domestic building insulation standards in homes.

The remaining public electricity supply companies in Great Britain have also shown an interest. Further detailed

discussions will need to take place to establish how best the electricity industry can become involved in the trust. Professor Littlechild has published a consultation document on energy efficiency in the electricity industry, in which he seeks opinions on various options for changing the regulatory regime to provide a stronger incentive towards the more efficient use of energy. The introduction of an "E" factor is one of the options canvassed.

This initiative has the potential to make a real contribution to energy efficiency and to protecting the environment, most notably in reducing emissions of carbon dioxide, the principal contributor to the threat of global warming.

The Government has also developed a number of related initiatives to improve energy efficiency and so reduce CO_2 emissions. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland and I have given a commitment to start consultation this year on the strengthening and extension of building regulations. This is likely to cover further improvements in standards of energy efficiency, the strengthening and extension of energy efficiency standards to renovation and conversions—this already applies in Scotland—and the incorporation of home energy rating into the requirements of the regulations. The Secretary of State for Employment and I have agreed an initiative to encourage training in energy efficiency through recognition of the value of a skilled workforce holding nationally recognised qualifications. The two Departments will promote the development of a body with a leading interest in the development of standards and qualifications in energy efficiency to work with industry lead bodies and others.

Taken together, these measures represent an important step in the development of the Government's policy on energy efficiency as a means of combatting the threat of global warming and meeting the Government's target for limiting CO_2 emissions.

Energy Efficiency

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what matters in regard to energy efficiency and energy conservation he expects to oversee in his Department.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 12 May 1992]:* Improving energy efficiency is the most immediate and cost-effective response to the threat of global warming. I will take a particular interest in ensuring that energy efficiency measures make an appropriate contribution to reducing carbon dioxide emissions.

Zoos

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the number of zoos *(a)* which have failed to meet his Department's standards of modern zoo practice, under the Zoo Licensing Act 1981, in each year since 1981 and *(b)* which have lost their licence as a result of such failure.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 12 May 1992]:* The operation of the Zoo Licensing Act 1981 is the responsibility of local authorities. No information on the numbers of zoos failing to meet the required standards or zoos which have lost their licenses is held centrally.

Nitrous Oxide Emissions

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he intends to take to reduce emissions of nitrous oxide from the nylon manufacturing industry.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 11 May 1992]:* There is only one nylon manufacturing facility in the United Kingdom. After discussions with Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution the operating company has announced its intention virtually to eliminate emissions of nitrous oxide from the plant concerned by 1996.

By 31 July 1993, ICI must apply to Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution for authorisation under part I of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 to operate its nylon manufacturing process.

Granting of the authorisation will be dependent upon the company putting forward a programme of continuing environmental improvements.

Estuaries

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the damage to estuaries over the last decade and its implications for estuarial flora and fauna as well as adherence to international wildlife conventions; and whether he has any proposals for the protection and improvement of estuaries.

Mr. Maclean: United Kingdom estuaries have to provide for many legitimate interests. The Government's planning policy guidance note for coastal planning—at present the subject of public consultation—emphasises the need for close co-operation between planning authorities to address the complex issues. Specific measures have been instituted where appropriate, for example, the Government view procedure for proposals for aggregates dredging and the introduction of environmental duties under the Transport and Works Act 1992. Many estuaries contain areas of special scientific interest, protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, and special protection areas for birds. The Government are considering the measures necessary to meet its obligations under the recently agreed habitats directive.

Mines (Contamination)

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will introduce legislation to amend the Mines and Quarries Act 1954 to make mine owners liable for the cost of clean up of any aquatic or land contamination caused by the mine.

Mr. Baldry: No. The Mines and Quarries Act 1954 is concerned with the health and safety of those working in the industry, not with pollution. All new mines have conditions regulating their operation and restoration, enforceable by local authorities. Derelict land grant is available for reclaiming land at mines which have closed without restoration conditions. The NRA has powers under section 161 of the Water Resources Act 1991 to make remedial action where water pollution has occurred and to recover the cost of taking such action from the person who caused the pollution.

Renewable Energy

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when the ministerial advisory committee on renewable energy will next meet; when he expects the committee to report; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: I have been asked to reply.

Future arrangements for the renewable energy advisory group are currently being considered.

Carbon Dioxide

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, which other countries will have to agree to stabilise their CO_2 emissions at 1990 levels by the year 2000 before the United Kingdom adopts this target; and what will be the latest date by which these countries will have to indicate their assent for the United Kingdom to take the measures necessary to achieve this emissions target.

Mr. Maclean: The climate change convention agreed in New York on 9 May will commit developed countries to take measures aimed at returning emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases not controlled by the Montreal protocol to their 1990 levels by the year 2000. We have always said that this global problem needs a global response, and we continue to place importance on the willingness of other countries, including our major competitors, to accept the commitments set out in the convention. We expect to be able to ratify the convention, alongside these countries, in good time to take the necessary measures.

Nuclear Waste

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement about the progress being made to find a site at which to store intermediate and low-level nuclear waste; and what estimates have been made of the safety levels at each site and the cost of preparing a site and running it.

Mr. Maclean: UK Nirex Ltd. is responsible for finding a site for the disposal of low and intermediate level radioactive waste. Nirex is concentrating its investigations on an area adjacent to British Nuclear Fuels' Sellafield site and expects to submit an application for planning permission to construct a deep disposal facility before the end of the year. Nirex will need to satisfy the relevant regulatory authorities about the safety of the construction of the facility and the safety of the disposal of the radioactive wastes consigned to it. The cost of developing and running the facility are matters for Nirex.

Coastline

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, what proposals he has to improve the protection of the coastline and offshore waters; and when he expects to implement them.

Mr. Maclean: The Government are committed to ensure the effective protection of the coastal and marine environment. It has recently published a draft planning policy guidance note on the coast which proposes strengthened protection. The Government's proposals for the coast will be set out more fully in our response to the recent report on coastal zone protection and planning from the Environment Committee of the House of Commons for the Session 1991-92.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Water and Sewerage Charges

Mr. David Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security in what way the current level of income support takes account of the regional variation in increases in water and sewerage charges; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Burt: Income support is a national benefit and does not take direct account of regional variations in prices. Water and sewerage charges were included in the Rossi index used to uprate income support in April this year, and accordingly benefit rates now reflect more accurately movements in prices for these items.

Pension Funds

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will introduce measures to provide temporary pension payments for Maxwell pensioners whose payments have ceased, pending the outcome of continuing investigations into the activities of Robert Maxwell and others; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: Existing legislation provides protection for those members of pension schemes who have been contracted out of the state earnings-related pension scheme (SERPS). If any scheme is wound up, there is a statutory provision designed to protect the guaranteed minimum pension which contracted-out schemes are required to provide. If there are not sufficient assets in the scheme to secure that level of pension, the Government ensure through SERPS that scheme members receive a pension equivalent to that which they would have received had they remained in SERPS. If any pensioner is facing financial difficulty and is unsure about his or her state benefit entitlement, he or she should contact the local social security office, which has been alerted to the difficulties that these pensioners face.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make it his policy to require each pension fund to furnish him with an annual statement on the performance of the fund and on the security of its investments; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to him on 21 January 1992 at column *183*.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Malawi

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) what measures Her Majesty's Government will be recommending to other members of the Paris Club at the meeting on 14 May, concerning aid to Malawi;

(2) if he will make a statement on what action Her Majesty's Government will be taking regarding aid to Malawi following the arrest and detention of Chakufwa Chihana.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We and our European partners have made clear to the Malawi Government that future levels of aid will reflect our assessment of Malawi's performance on good government and human rights issues. The treatment of Mr. Chihana is a case in point. The consultative group meeting for Malawi, taking place in Paris under World bank auspices on 11 to 13 May, provides a further opportunity to make our position clear.

In the absence of a constructive response to our concerns, we have already told the Malawi authorities that we propose to limit further our development aid to Malawi. We shall, however, confirm that we are ready to consider ways of helping to alleviate the effects of the drought. In the light of consultations prior to the meeting, we anticipate that other donors will adopt a similar approach.

Aid

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much overseas aid is proposed for the current year; what was the figure for the year to May 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Provision for net aid to developing countries in the financial year 1992-93 is £1,831 million. Net aid expenditure in the financial year 1978-79 was £727 million.

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress has been made towards agreeing the future financial basis of the International Fund for Agricultural Development special programme for Africa, and if he will make a statement about the contribution due from the United Kingdom.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The Governing Council of the International Fund for Agricultural Development—IFAD—agreed in May 1991 that the special programme for Africa should be extended for a second and final phase. To date, firm pledges totalling almost $20 million have been made by Kuwait, Sweden and Nigeria. Conditional pledges have been made by France, Belgium and the Netherlands.

We made it clear in 1986 that we viewed the special programmes a one-off exercise, justified by the disappointingly low level of resources pledged for IFAD's second replenishment. We consider IFAD's future activities in Africa should now be financed from its regular resources in the same way as its work for other poor regions. The most important priority is to work for a successful outcome to the fourth replenishment of IFAD's resources, discussions on which began in Qatar in April and will continue in Rome in July.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what percentage of *(a)* bilateral aid and *(b)* multilateral aid from the United Kingdom goes into (i) health projects, (ii) education projects, (iii) agricultural projects and (iv) commercial ventures.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 11 May 1992]:* The amount and shares of bilateral aid allocable by sector spent on projects in the sectors of health, education and agriculture in 1990 (the latest year for which figures are available) were:

	Amount (£000)	*Percentage of bilateral aid allocable by sector*
Health	61,182	10·69
Education	103,098	18·02
Agriculture	52,214	9·12

In addition, there are some multi-sector projects which also benefit health, education and agriculture. This assistance cannot readily be quantified.

Aid for commercial ventures is not identified in a way which allows aggregate figures to be provided. Much of our programme aid to support economic reform programmes is used to help recipient governments cover the foreign exchange requirement of imports needed to increase capacity utilisation in commercial firms in developing countries. Our bilateral programme aid in 1990 was £73 million. ODA supports small enterprise development. It also supports the reform and privatisation of parastatal bodies and some projects which they implement. The Commonwealth Development Corporation operates in developing countries investing in both private and public sector commercial enterprises and projects. Total CDC investment in 1990 was £137 million.

A comprehensive breakdown of multilateral agencies' expenditure by sector is not available. However certain multilateral agencies specialise in the sectors listed, for example the Food and Agricultural Organisation and the World Health Organisation. I therefore refer the hon. Member to table 8 of "British Aid Statistics" 1986-1990, a copy of which is in the Library of the House. This table gives details of United Kingdom multilateral aid by agency for the last five years.

Earth Summit

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proposals Her Majesty's Government will be making at the United Nations Conference on Environmental Development meeting in June to enhance environmental protection in developing nations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Her Majesty's Government has played a leading role in developing proposals to be discussed at the UNCED (the Earth Summit) during the four preparatory committee meetings held to date, and at the inter-governmental negotiations on the conventions for climate change and biological diversity. The specific proposals to be considered at the Earth Summit are: agreement to global conventions on climate change and biodiversity; a statement of principles on forests; a declaration (the Rio declaration) of environmental and development principles; a comprehensive action plan on environment and development for the next century (agenda 21) and agreement on reinforcement of international institutions dealing with environment and development.

We shall continue to work with other Governments at the Earth Summit in June to reach agreement on the proposals to be considered at that meeting.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Ethnic Minorities

Mr. Janner: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what steps he has taken to recruit members of ethnic minorities in top grades of employment at his Department.

Mr. Eggar: When, very occasionally, the DTI recruits senior grades directly the advertisements make it clear that the Department is an equal opportunities employer. However, it is normal practice for recruitment to senior grades to be undertaken by the Recruitment and Assessment Services Agency on behalf of the Civil Service Commissioners. A number of steps have been taken in this context to aid the recruitment of members of ethnic minorities including the use of validated selection procedures to ensure that selection is fair and non-discriminatory.

London Stock Exchange

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what representations he has received about the decision of the London stock exchange to contract out its information technology operation to Arthur Andersen; what implications this decision will have on the forthcoming introduction of paperless trading with Taurus; what steps he intends to take to assure that the core business of the exchange is properly protected; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hamilton: My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade has received one representation about the decision of the London stock exchange to contract out its information technology operation.

The implications of the decision for the introduction of Taurus the electronic system for the recording and transfer of title to shares and other securities, are a matter, in the first instance, for the stock exchange. They will be taken into account when the stock exchange seeks consent for the admission of the first securities to Taurus under regulation 5(1) of the Uncertificated Securities Regulations 1992.

Postage Stamps

Mr. Bowis: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will direct that a set of postage stamps be issued to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the battle of El Alamein on 23 October.

Mr. Leigh: The choice of themes for special stamps is a matter for the Post Office. I understand however that the Post Office Board has approved the issue of a set of stamps in 1994 on the theme of "Liberation" on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of D-day. Further, in 1995, the Post Office in collaboration with other postal administrations of the Conference of European Posts and Telecoms will issue stamps on the theme of "Peace and Freedom" to mark the end of world war 2.

House of Fraser

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the investigations carried out into the takeover of House of Fraser by the Fayed brothers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hamilton: Independent inspectors were appointed to investigate the affairs of House of Fraser Holdings plc. They were asked to look in particular at the circumstances surrounding the acquisition of shares in House of Fraser plc in 1984 and 1985.

The inspectors' report, which was published on 7 March 1990, reflects a carefully considered and thorough investigation.

Copies of the report were disclosed to other regulatory bodies to enable them to consider under their own powers or rules whether any disciplinary or regulatory action was appropriate. The responsibility for deciding whether to take action in such cases rests with the body concerned.

Defence Equipment (Iraq)

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what assessment his Department had made of the activities of the company TMG Engineering that relate to the export of non-lethal defence equipment to Iraq;

(2) what assessment his Department had made of the activities of the company Technology and Development Group that relate to the export of non-lethal defence equipment to Iraq;

(3) what assessment his Department has made of the activities of the company Matrix Churchill that relate to the export of non-lethal defence equipment to Iraq.

Mr. Needham: Between 1987 and 1990, Matrix Churchill Ltd. and its then parent companies, TMG and TDG Ltd., were involved in matters which are the subject of current legal proceedings. In view of this, it would not be appropriate to make any comment on the matter.

UKAEA

Mr. Riddick: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he proposes to publish the Monopolies and Mergers Commission report on the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hamilton: The report is published today. The commission was asked to carry out an extensive inquiry into the efficiency and costs of and the service provided by the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority (AEA).

The commission concludes that AEA is an organisation undergoing fundamental change, whose present structure had been in operation for only 16 months when the inquiry started. It concludes that AEA could continue to make efficiency and quality improvements, and could generate higher net revenue. It has identified particular weaknesses in financial and project control, investment appraisal and marketing and makes 58 recommendations for improving AEA's performance across all of its business.

The commission reports that it was none the less impressed by the expertise, enthusiasm and dedication of AEA's staff, and recognises the substantial progress made already with a radical change of culture. It notes AEA plans to cut its staff further, by a sixth, in order to contain costs and achieve a closer match of manpower to the needs of the businesses. It also says that future commercial viability will require significant growth and perhaps some financial reconstruction.

AEA is moving from a location-based management structure, providing a service on behalf of the Government, to a much more commercially driven business-based organisation. Its nine businesses (four nuclear and five industrial) have forecast external sales

ranging from £14 million to £126 million in 1991-92. The new structure is still evolving and the commission found that it was too soon to reach firm conclusions about its success. The commission notes that AEA itself recognises that it still has a long way to go to complete its transformation into a fully commercial operation.

he commission notes two other general considerations. First, AEA's nuclear activities still account for some two thirds of the external sales of AEA's businesses. Secondly, AEA's nine businesses, with activities ranging from nuclear research to petroleum services, rest uneasily in the public sector where their entrepreneurial activities are inevitably somewhat constrained. The commission has concluded that any decision on whether or not AEA's business activities should be removed from the public sector would be appropriate after completion of the review of nuclear power which the Government have announced they intend to carry out in 1994. It recognises that this would entail both some financial reconstruction and satisfactory arrangements for taking care of AEA's legacy of nuclear sites. Meanwhile, the commission has welcomed the steps AEA has taken, and is continuing to take, to reduce its very high overheads, although it fears that under present arrangements overheads are likely to remain uncomfortably large.

The AEA will produce a preliminary response to the commission's findings within three to four months, in the light of which my right hon. Friend will make a statement.

Satellite Monitoring

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what support will be given by the European Space Agency to the international initiative to use new and existing satellites to monitor global changes in the environment, following the meeting in Cambridge in April.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 11 May 1992]:* The meeting, which took place in London on 28 and 29 April at the initiative of the British Government, was of countries and organisations involved in the provision and use of earth observation satellite data for environmental purposes. It discussed possible elements of an initiative aimed at making the best use of this data. The European Space Agency (ESA), which participated in the meeting, will play a full part and has a well-established earth observation programme to support such an initiative. The elements of ESA's programme are the first European remote-sensing satellite (ERS1), now in orbit, the ERS2 satellite, due to be launched in 1994, and two future missions: POEM1, for which preparatory work is already under way, and POEM2, which is being planned. At the same time systems for receiving, processing and disseminating data from these satellites are being developed. The United Kingdom will continue to play a significant role in these programmes.

Nuclear Power Stations

53. **Mr. David Porter:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement about progress on planning for the construction of Sizewell C nuclear station in Suffolk.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 12 May 1992]:* No decisions about the construction of new nuclear stations beyond Sizewell B will be made before the Government review the prospects for nuclear power in 1994.

55. **Mr. David Porter:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make it his policy to bring forward the national review of the nuclear energy supply programme before 1994; and if he will make a statement on the future of nuclear power stations.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 12 May 1992]:* The Government have no plans to bring forward the 1994 review and no decisions about the construction of new nuclear stations beyond Sizewell B will be made before 1994. Nuclear Electric will continue to run its existing stations as efficiently, economically and safely as possible and to build Sizewell B to time and cost.

Coal Industry

94. **Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment he has made of the implications of the privatisation of the coal industry for the British mining engineering industry.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 12 May 1992]:* No decisions have yet been taken on the form and timing of the privatisation of the coal industry. The Government have made it clear that interested parties will be given the opportunity to contribute their views before decisions are taken.

Takeovers

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) whether he proposes to instruct the Monopolies and Mergers Commission to take public interest criteria into account in assessing potential takeovers;

(2) whether he proposes any amendment to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission's present approach to potential takeovers in which the implication for competition is the sole criterion taken into consideration.

Mr. Heseltine *[holding answer 12 May 1992]:* Section 84 of the Fair Trading Act 1973 requires the Monopolies and Mergers Commission to take into account all matters which appear to them in the particular circumstances to be relevant in determining whether a merger or proposed merger operates or may be expected to operate against the public interest. Competition is an important, but not the only, consideration in the Monopolies and Mergers Commission's assessment of mergers.

The 1988 White Paper "DTI—the Department for Enterprise" (Cm 278) stated that the Government's policy is that the main, though not exclusive, consideration in determining whether mergers should be referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission should be their potential effect on competition. This remains the position.

Point of Ayr Liquefaction Plant

Mr. Hanson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has for further investment in the Point of Ayr liquefaction plant.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 12 May 1992]:* Following discussions with British Coal, my Department has agreed to increase its contribution to this project from £3 million to £5·412 million.

HEALTH

Royal College of Midwives

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if her Department has considered an application for an exhibition relating to the Royal College of Midwives to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall.

Mr. Sackville: Under procedures agreed by the Administration Committee, I understand that arrangements have been made with the authorities of the House for the exhibition to be held in the Upper Waiting Hall from 8 to 12 June.

Mental Illness

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what representations she has received concerning registration of people with a mental illness under section 29 of the National Assistance Act 1948; and if she will make a statement;

(2) what guidance she has given as to the circumstances in which a local authority may exercise discretion as to whether to register any people with a mental illness under section 29 of the National Assistance Act 1948; and if she will make a statement;

(3) what guidance she has given to local authorities concerning registration of people with a mental illness under section 29 of the National Assistance Act 1948; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: One letter has been received from the right hon. Member on 19 February 1992.

Guidance is contained in local authority circular LAC 13/74, which also sets out my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State's approvals and directions under section 29 of the National Assistance Act 1948, and local authority circular LAC 17/74.

Under my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State's directions contained in LAC 13/74, those who are mentally disordered (the expression used by the Act, which includes those who are mentally ill), should be registered under section 29 and local authorities need to provide for their registration.

LAC 17/74 recognised that the registration of mentally disordered persons had not been widely practised, nor had it been encouraged by the Department, and reminded local authorities that the Department's views on registration of mentally disordered persons remained unchanged. Copies of the circulars are available in the Library.

In practice, neither the Department nor local authorities have considered it appropriate to register all people with a mental illness, as the majority do not meet the criteria laid down in the circular of substantial and permanent handicap. Decisions about the provision and management of personal social services for mentally ill people, including the assessment of care needs, are the responsibilities of local authority social services departments.

Mentally ill people are entitled to aftercare help under the care programme approach introduced from April 1991.

This required all district health authorities, in collaboration with local social services departments, to initiate explicit individually tailored care programmes for all in-patients about to be discharged from mental illness hospitals and all new patients accepted by the specialist psychiatric services. The essence of the approach is that the needs of each patient, both for continuing health and social care and for accommodation, are systematically assessed and appropriate arrangements made. These include the identification of a key worker to keep in close touch with the patient and to monitor that the agreed package of health and social care is delivered.

Mentally ill people will also be eligible for assessment of their needs by local authorities under the NHS and Community Care Act 1990. Local authorities also have a duty to provide after care services to persons detained under the Mental Health Act 1983 (section 117).

Breast Feeding

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement outlining her policy on the future funding of the joint breastfeeding initiative.

Mr. Sackville: The joint breastfeeding initiative (JBI) was launched in October 1988 as a means of bringing together representatives from the voluntary breastfeeding organisations and relevant health care professions. The JBI's remit was to increase the prevalence and duration of breastfeeding through professional and public education about the benefits to be gained from breastfeeding and to making it more socially acceptable. It has received a section 64 project grant from the Department since its inception. The rules of the section 64 scheme mean the funding of the JBI in its present form is due to end later this year.

The structure, management and purpose of all four voluntary breastfeeding organisations have recently been examined as part of the Department's on-going review of bodies it funds. Discussions on the outcome of these reviews and future arrangements are under way with all relevant organisations.

It remains the Government's policy to protect and promote breastfeeding as the best means of nurturing infants. We will seek to build on the achievements of the JBI when deciding future arrangements.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what support is being given by her Department to national breastfeeding week from 18 to 23 May.

Mr. Sackville: Responsibility for organising national breastfeeding week rests with the joint breastfeeding initiative (JBI). Since its launch in October 1988, the JBI has received financial support from the Department totalling some £142,000. The Department has always given support for national breastfeeding week which plays a valuable role in raising public awareness of the benefits of breastfeeding.

Clinical Grading Appeals

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she has any plans to meet representatives of nurses and midwives to discuss progress in dealing with clinical grading appeals; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: Discussion on clinical grading appeals are a matter for the Nursing and Midwifery Staffs Negotiating Council. I am pleased to announce that the council has reached agreement on speeding up and streamlining the appeals process. Copies of the agreement, advance letter (NM)4/92, are available in the Library.

Abortion

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what has been the total number of abortions performed under the Abortions Act 1967 since its implementation; how many of these abortions were performed in emergency to save the life of the mother; and what percentage of the former figure this latter figure represents.

Mr. Sackville: A total of 3,688,096 abortions have been performed in England, Wales and Scotland under the Abortion Act since implementation. (This covers the period from the time when the Act came into force on 27 April 1968 until 30 September 1991, the latest date for which figures are available). Of these, 151 were performed in emergency to save the life of the woman. These represent 0·004 per cent. of the total number of abortions.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the total number of abortions performed each quarter in pregnancies of 24 weeks or more in the eight quarters prior to the implementation of the appropriate sections of the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act 1990; and what are the comparable figures for the numbers of abortions performed on pregnancies of 24 weeks or more in each quarter since the implementation of the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act 1990.

Mr. Sackville: The information for England and Wales is as follows:

Number of abortions

Quarter	*At 24 weeks gestation*	*At 25 weeks gestation and over*
June 1989	22	3
September 1989	10	7
December 1989	10	5
March 1990	6	6
June 1990	11	6
September 1990	6	3
December 1990	12	6
March 1991	13	8
June 1991[1]	9	12
September 1991	4	14
December 1991	n/a	n/a

[1] The changes to the Abortion Act 1967 enacted in 1990 came into effect on 1 April 1991. These included the introduction of a time limit of 24 weeks for the main grounds for abortion.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health for what reasons it was decided that the guidelines recently issued by his Department on the protection afforded to ancillary workers by the conscience clause of the Abortion Act 1967 should extend that protection only to personnel involved in disposing of foetal remains following the abortion and not to those personnel involved in preparing a woman for an abortion.

Mr. Sackville: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply my right hon. Friend the then Minister for Health gave to the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) on 20 December 1991 at column *355*.

Dentists

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what progress has been made with the joint inquiry into the alleged excess of payments to dentists in 1991-92; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Hazel Grove (Sir T. Arnold) on 12 May at column *85*.

Air Pollution

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what measures she intends to take in response to evidence referred to by the chairman of her committee on the medical aspects of air pollution that high ozone levels attack babies' bronchial tubes making them more likely to develop allergies.

Mr. Sackville: The advisory group on the medical aspects of air pollution episodes considered the evidence on the medical effects of exposure to ground level ozone in its first report which was published by HMSO in August 1991. Copies of the report are available in the Library.

Some reports of the speech of the advisory group's chairman to a recent meeting of the National Society for Clean Air have simplified and exaggerated what he said. The group recognised the importance of any possible interaction between allergen sensitisation and/or ozone provoked inflammation. It found that some studies showed that, in animals, very high concentrations of ozone may produce attenuation of and/or an increase in, the response to allergens, but it concluded that more work would be needed before a clear understanding of the likely effects of ambient ozone levels on allergic response in people is obtained. It has been suggested that, in children, exposure to environmental tobacco smoke in the first year of life enhances the risk of the development of airway allergies and thus, possibly, asthma. But the evidence on whether ozone is also a contributing factor is inconclusive.

The advisory group made a number of recommendations for research, including basic research on the biochemical and cellular mechanisms involved in the effects of ozone on the lung; research on the effects of low concentrations of ozone upon people; and epidemiological studies on the possible relationship between exposure to air pollutants in general, and ozone in particular, on health. The Department has raised this with the Medical Research Council which is the main agency through which the Government support biomedical and clinical research in the United Kingdom.

EMPLOYMENT

Manufacturing Industry

Mr. David Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish a table of *(a)* company manufacturing employment as a percentage of total employment and *(b)* company manufacturing output as a percentage of total output in (i) 1975, (ii) 1979, (iii) 1985 and (iv) the latest year for which annual statistics are available.

Mr. McLoughlin: The available information is shown in the following tables:

Seasonally adjusted employees and self-employed in manufacturing in Great Britain as a percentage of all employees and self-employed

	Per cent.
June 1975	31·0
June 1979	29·7
June 1985	23·3

	Per cent.
June 1991	20·3
December 1991	20·2

Manufacturing output in the United Kingdom as a percentage of total output (1, 2)

	Per cent.
1975	29·0
1979	28·7
1985	23·9
1990	22·4

1. Net income of manufacturing industries as a percentage of income based measure of GDP.
2. Source: tables 2.1 of "United Kingdom National Accounts" (CSO's Blue Book).

Labour and Social Affairs Council

Mr. Robert B. Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the outcome of the meeting of the Labour and Social Affairs Council held in Luxembourg on 30 April; and if she will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The Council held its second full discussion of the draft directive on the organisation of working time.

I emphasised the very damaging effects of the proposal on competitiveness, costs and take-home pay. Significant progress was made. The Council did not take a vote; there was general agreement that it was for each member state to decide whether to designate Sunday as a standard day of rest; and there was substantial support for the view that it should be possible to derogate from the directive through collective agreements in a way appropriate to the local and decentralised bargaining arrangements that apply in the United Kingdom.

On the 48-hour maximum working week, I again set out the severe difficulties which would flow from the present text. I made it clear that the Government were prepared to see reference to 48 hours in the text of the directive only if solutions were found to the United Kingdom's major problems with the proposal.

The Portuguese President of the Council said that the working time directive would also be on the agenda of the next scheduled Labour and Social Affairs Council on 24 June.

A number of other proposals were agreed. The Council unanimously agreed a health and safety directive relevant to extractive industries, and also a directive to update the existing 1975 directive on collective redundancies. Two measures were adopted which will assist freedom of movement for workers within the Community: amendments were approved to regulations on social security for migrant workers and to the SEDOC system of notifying vacancies throughout the Community. Amendments were also agreed to the laws, regulations and administrative provisions relating to the classification, packaging and labelling of dangerous substances.

Following this meeting of the Council, of the 38 proposals put forward so far under the EC social action programme, 21 have already been agreed by the Council or, where appropriate, the Commission.

DEFENCE

Aircraft Statistics

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his policy relating to the release of information on the number of aircraft in individual RAF squadrons.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The 1992 edition of the Statement on the Defence Estimates will include the number and type of all aircraft assigned to RAF Squadrons in Europe.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many troop-carrying helicopters are permanently assigned to each helicopter-equipped RAF air transport squadron, listed on page 83 of the Statement of the Defence Estimates 1991, volume 1.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The RAF's support helicopter fleet is in the process of being reorganised. The numbers of aircraft are changing as follows:

Squadron	*1 April 1992*	*1 July 1992*
7 Squadron:	13 Chinook	18 Chinook
18 Squadron:	10 Chinook	5 Chinook, 5 Puma
72 Squadron:	24 Wessex	15 Wessex
33 Squadron:	21 Puma	12 Puma
230 Squadron:	11 Puma	15 Puma
The Queen's Flight:	2 Wessex	No change

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many anti-tank helicopters are permanently assigned to each Army air corps regiment.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Lynx helicopters, equipped with TOW missiles, in the anti-tank role are currently deployed with the Army Air Corps as follows:

BAOR	*Number of Aircraft*
1 Regiment	18
3 Regiment	22
4 Regiment	18
24 Airmobile Brigade	
7 Regiment	6
9 Regiment	12

In addition the Army Air Corps Centre at Middle Wallop holds 12 helicopters, and 3 Commando Brigade has six helicopters which are operated by the Royal Marines.

Nuclear Weapons

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what official information on the deployment or non-deployment of nuclear weapons on board Royal Navy ships has been provided to foreign Governments in the past.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It has been invariable practice of successive British Governments neither to confirm nor to deny the presence of nuclear weapons in specific locations at specific times. We are, however, willing to make clear that it is no longer our practice to deploy tactical nuclear weapons on board Royal Navy ships.

Project Costs

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his policy relating to the release of information on the estimated costs of individual projects.

Mr. Aitken: Details of estimated expenditure on individual projects will only be classified in cases where the existence of the project is itself classified. There may in addition be circumstances in which such information would be treated as commercially confidential to protect the commercial position of my Department or a contractor.

Rosyth and Devonport Dockyards

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment has been made of the future size and shape of the work force at the Rosyth and Devonport dockyards.

Mr. Aitken: The size and shape of the work forces at Devonport and Rosyth royal dockyards are a matter for the commercial judgment of the management companies. The companies are kept informed about the MOD's expected ship refitting programme.

Electro-magnetic Propulsion

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what work has been carried out by the Royal Armament Research and Development Establishment on the electro-magnetic propulsion of projectiles.

Mr. Aitken: I have asked the chief executive of the Defence Research Agency to reply to the hon. Member.

British Army of the Rhine

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the average number of anti-tank guided missile systems in each British Army of the Rhine infantry battalion.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Twenty-four.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the average number of surface-to-air guided missile systems in each British Army of the Rhine air defence regiment.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: There are currently two Rapier air defence regiments in BAOR, one of which has 36 systems and the other 44.

Training

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what is his policy regarding the release of information on the provision of military training by British service personnel;

(2) what agreement has been reached with the Thai Government relating to the release of information regarding the provision of British military training assistance; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Detailed information about United Kingdom military training provided for overseas personnel is generally confidential between Her Majesty's Government and the Government concerned. This policy continues to apply in the case of Thailand.

WE177 Bomb

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what expenditure has been incurred to date on the study of procurement options for the possible replacement of the WE177 free-fall nuclear bomb.

Mr. Aitken: The warhead element of the cost is classified. Study of the procurement options for the vehicle has incurred costs to date of some £6 million.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the number of procurement options for the possible replacement of the WE177 free-fall bomb that are currently being studied.

Mr. Aitken: We are continuing to study a range of possible options for the eventual replacement of WE177. The hon. Member will know that these include French and American tactical air-to-surface missiles. No decision has yet been taken.

"Options for Change"

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the current assessment of the nature of the military threat from *(a)* Iraq, *(b)* Libya and *(c)* Iran; and what assessment of the potential military threats from each of these countries has taken place as a result of the "Options for Change" study.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Iraq, Iran and Libya do not present a direct threat to the United Kingdom but all have the potential to put at risk peace and stability in the Mediterranean and the Gulf. We continue to monitor the risks of conflict in these areas. Following the restructuring of our armed forces, the United Kingdom will continue to have a national capability to deal with contingency operations outside the NATO area.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what communications there have been between his Department and *(a)* British Aerospace, *(b)* GEC, *(c)* Lucas Aerospace and *(d)* other defence contractors regarding the industrial and economic consequences of "Options for Change".

Mr. Aitken: Ministers and officials in my Department are frequently in communication with a wide range of defence contractors, including all those mentioned by the hon. Gentleman, on the implications of changes to the defence programme.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will make it his policy to publish a statement detailing the anticipated effect of the "Options for Change" process on *(a)* the procurement budget and *(b)* the personnel budget.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: On current plans the defence budget is set to fall by around 5·5 per cent. in real terms between 1990-91 and 1994-95 (excluding direct Gulf costs and redundancy provision) as the new force structure is introduced. Current forecasts suggest that the move to the new force structure will also lead to a small increase in the proportion of the budget spent on equipment and a slight decrease in the proportion devoted to personnel costs.

Recruitment

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will change his policy on the release of information on the recruiting levels of individual regiments.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Information on the recruiting levels of individual regiments is not available centrally and could be produced only at disproportionate cost.

Training

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many qualifications were acquired each year since records began by service personnel as a result of pre-release training.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Detailed records of the qualifications obtained are not kept by the MOD. Each year many thousands of service personnel undertake a wide variety of pre-release resettlement training courses. Much of this training is within civilian organisations or at civilian educational establishments and in many cases leads directly or contributes to recognised civilian qualifications. During their careers many service men and women also make use of service facilities and support to acquire a broad range of qualifications through attendance at further education courses and distance learning including the Open university.

Budget

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his policy regarding the release of information on the long-term costings of the defence budget.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The 10-year costing of the defence programme (known as the long-term costing) is designed for internal planning purposes. Approval to commit expenditure is subject to separate procedures and endorsement by Ministers as appropriate. To avoid giving a misleading impression as to the firmness of our plans, we would not therefore normally provide details of the contents of the long-term costing.

Naval Craft Orders

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many orders for *(a)* type 23 frigates, *(b)* auxiliary oiler replenishment vessels and *(c)* other naval craft will be placed in the next 10 years; and in which years they will be ordered.

Mr. Aitken: Our plans to provide the Navy with modern, capable equipment include further orders of type 23 frigates and support ships. However, it is not our practice to disclose details of the internal planning assumptions made in our forward equipment programme.

Equipment Exports

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the approximate number of times in the last 12 years that contracts have been agreed for the supply of non-lethal military equipment to *(a)* Libya, *(b)* Iraq and *(c)* South Africa.

Mr. Aitken: It has been the consistent policy of successive Governments not to discuss particulars of defence sales with other countries as these are matters of commercial confidentiality. However, the Government adhere to the EC embargo on the sale of military equipment and services to Libya and the United Nations embargos on South Africa and Iraq. The United Kingdom has, in fact, refused since 1984 to supply defence equipment or services to Iraq which could prolong the Iran-Iraq conflict.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) how many Rolls-Royce Olympus and Proteus engines have been sold to *(a)* the Iranian navy and *(b)* the Iraqi navy in the last 13 years;

(2) what spare parts for Chieftain tanks have been supplied to *(a)* the Iranian Government, *(b)* the Iraqi Government and *(c)* the Jordanian Government in the last 13 years;

(3) how many air defence radars Plessey has sold to *(a)* the Iranian Government and *(b)* the Iraqi Government in the last 13 years;

(4) which British companies have sold mortar-locating radar to the Iraqi Government in the last 13 years.

Mr. Aitken: It has been the consistent policy of successive Governments not to discuss particulars of defence sales with other countries as these are matters of commercial confidentiality. I would add, however, that since 1984 the United Kingdom has refused to supply any equipment which could prolong or exacerbate the Iran-Iraq conflict, and since August 1990 has complied with the terms of the United Nations embargo on arms sales to Iraq.

SCOTLAND

Rents-to-mortgages Scheme

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many sales have been completed under the Government's rents-to-mortgages scheme in Scotland; and what this figure is as a proportion of the total number of tenants elegible to participate in the scheme.

Mr. Lang: Three hundred and six tenants had bought their homes under the rent-to-mortgage scheme at 31 March 1992. This represents just under 0·1 per cent. of the 370,000 tenants estimated to be eligible for the scheme.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much has been spent by his Department on administration and publicity for the Government's rents-to-mortgages scheme since its inception.

Mr. Lang: My Department has spent £380,000 on publicity for the rent-to-mortgage scheme, including the cost of printing leaflets. No calculation has been made of the cost of the time spent by staff in my Department, since the work was part of their normal duties.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many applications have been received under the Government's rents-to-mortgages scheme from tenants of flats.

Mr. Lang: This information is not available.

M80

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on his preferred line of route for the M80 between Staffs and Haggs.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 11 May 1992]:* Consultation with Strathclyde regional council is being arranged for early next month, when a formal presentation to elected members and officials will outline the recommendations and conclusions of the feasibility study. A presentation to the district councils will follow soon afterwards. The comments and impact received will then be considered and amendments made where possible, prior to official publication of the line. This procedure should allow any conflict of interest to be addressed and discussed fully, and lead to early agreement on the recommended route and access arrangements. The present aim is to publish the preferred line later this year.

Forestry Commission Land

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what changes he intends to make towards his policy of disposing of Forestry Commission land and woodlands; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 12 May 1992]:* The Government have no plans to change the policy on the disposal of Forestry Commission land and woodlands which was set out by my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Pentlands (Mr. Rifkind) on 16 June 1989, *Official Report*, columns *544-45*.

Contempt of Court

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many instances there have been of committal to prison for contempt of court in the last 10 years for which information is available.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 12 May 1992]:* The available information is set out in the table.

Persons sentenced to custody for contempt of court in Scotland 1981-90

Year	*Number*
1981	34
1982	35
1983	40
1984	38
1985	46
1986	45
1987	33
1988	33
1989	38
1990	31

Note:

Only the charge which receives the severest penalty on any occasion is recorded in the statistics, so when any custodial sentence for contempt of court is not the main sentence, the contempt of court charge is not included in the table.

Self-inflicted Injury

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list by penal institution the number of instances of self-inflicted injury in the last 10 years for which information is available.

Lord James Douglas Hamilton *[holding answer 12 May 1992]:* The numbers of self-inflicted injuries by institution over the last 10 years are as follows:

Institution	*Number*
1982	
Aberdeen	2
Barlinnie	1
Dumfries	1
Friarton	1
Longriggend	1
Polmont	1
Perth	1
1983	
Aberdeen	2
Edinburgh	2
Glenochil	3
Longriggend	2
Polmont	1
Perth	1
1984	
Aberdeen	1
Barlinnie	2
Cornton Vale	2
Edinburgh	1
Friarton	1
Inverness	2
Longriggend	5
Perth	1
1985	
Aberdeen	2
Barlinnie	1
Cornton Vale	2
Dungavel	1
Dumfries	1
Edinburgh	1
Friarton	2
Glenochil	1
Inverness	2
Longriggend	14
Noranside	1
Polmont	3
Perth	1
Peterhead	1
1986	
Aberdeen	2
Cornton Vale	2
Edinburgh	2
Inverness	1
Longriggend	11
Low Moss	1
Polmont	5
Perth	2
Shotts	1
1987	
Aberdeen	3
Barlinnie	2
Cornton Vale	4
Dumfries	1
Glenochil	2
Longriggend	1
Polmont	2
Perth	1
1988	
Aberdeen	1
Barlinnie	1
Cornton Vale	1
Edinburgh	1
Glenochil	1
Polmont	3
Peterhead	3
Shotts	2
1989	
Aberdeen	3
Barlinnie	6
Cornton Vale	1
Edinburgh	1
Inverness	1
Longriggend	5

Institution	Number
Polmont	1
Peterhead	3
Shotts	1
1990	
Aberdeen	3
Barlinnie	11
Cornton Vale	1
Edinburgh	1
Glenochil	1
Greenock	2
Inverness	1
Peterhead	1
Shotts	1
1991	
Aberdeen	3
Barlinnie	12
Edinburgh	1
Greenock	1
Polmont	3
Shotts	1
1992 (to date)	
Barlinnie	4
Barlinnie special unit	1
Edinburgh	1
Perth	2

Suicides

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list by penal institution the number of cases of *(a)* attempted suicide and *(b)* suicide in the last 10 years for which information is available.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 12 May 1992]:* The numbers of attempted suicides and suicides by institution over the last 10 years are as follows:

Institution	Number
1982	
Suicides	
Dumfries	1
Glenochil	2
Attempted suicides	
Aberdeen	1
Barlinnie	1
Edinburgh	2
Noranside	1
1983	
Suicides	
Barlinnie	1
Glenochil	1
Attempted suicides	
Barlinnie	1
1984	
Suicides	
Barlinnie	3
Edinburgh	1
Glenochil	1
Attempted Suicides	
Barlinnie	4
Glenochil	2
Longriggend	2
Polmont	1
Perth	2
1985	
Suicides	
Barlinnie	3
Glenochil	2
Perth	1
Attempted Suicides	
Aberdeen	9
Barlinnie	2
Cornton Vale	1
Dumfries	1
Edinburgh	2
Glenochil	1
Longriggend	5
Low Moss	1
Noranside	1
Polmont	8
1986	
Suicides	
Barlinnie	3
Cornton Vale	1
Edinburgh	1
Perth	2
Attempted Suicides	
Barlinnie	3
Cornton Vale	1
Longriggend	10
Polmont	9
Perth	1
1987	
Suicides	
Barlinnie	3
Dumfries	1
Edinburgh	1
Glenochil	1
Attempted Suicides	
Aberdeen	1
Barlinnie	1
Cornton Vale	1
Dungavel	1
Edinburgh	3
Longriggend	2
Shotts	3
1988	
Suicides	
Barlinnie	6
Glenochil	1
Attempted Suicides	
Barlinnie	3
Cornton Vale	2
Edinburgh	4
Glenochil	3
Longriggend	7
Polmont	2
Perth	1
Peterhead	4
Shotts	8
1989	
Suicides	
Aberdeen	1
Barlinnie	1
Polmont	1
Perth	1
Shotts	2
Attempted Suicides	
Aberdeen	4
Barlinnie	2
Cornton Vale	1
Edinburgh	2
Glenochil	1
Inverness	1
Longriggend	5

Institution	Number
Low Moss	1
Polmont	3
Peterhead	2
Shotts	1
1990	
Suicides	
Barlinnie	2
Attempted suicides	
Barlinnie	11
Cornton Vale	2
Edinburgh	3
Glenochil	1
Longriggend	6
Polmont	1
1991	
Suicides	
Barlinnie	1
Greenock	1
Longriggend	1
Perth	1
Attempted suicides	
Aberdeen	1
Barlinnie	1
Cornton Vale	4
Edinburgh	5
Inverness	3
Longriggend	5
Polmont	1
Perth	3
Peterhead	1
Shotts	1
1992 (to date)	
Suicides	
Barlinnie	1
Polmont	1
Attempted suicides	
Aberdeen	1
Barlinnie	6
Glenochil	1
Polmont	6

Civil Jury Trials

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many civil jury trials have been heard in the Court of Session in each of the last 10 years for which information is available.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 12 May 1992]:* The numbers of civil jury trials in the Court of Session for the years 1982 to 1991 inclusive are as follows:

	Number
1982	4
1983	5
1984	4
1985	4
1986	6
1987	6
1988	5
1989	4
1990	Nil
1991	6

Sheriffs

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many persons currenty hold commissions as *(a)* full-time sheriffs and *(b)* temporary sheriffs.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 12 May 1992]:* Ninety-six persons currently hold commissions as full-time sheriffs and 110 persons as temporary sheriffs.

Courts Administration

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the current establishment of the Scottish Courts administration; how many vacancies there are; and in what grades.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 12 May 1991]:* On 5 May 1992, the establishment of the Scottish court service was 758½ full-time staff. There were 10 vacancies at that date, five in the AA grade and five typists.

Forestry Commission

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he has any plans to privatise the Forestry Commission in full or in part; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 12 May 1992]:* The Government have no such plans.

Population Statistics

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the mid-1991 estimates by the Register General of Populations of those aged 17 years and over, plus 63 per cent. of those aged 16 years for each district council area and parliamentary constituency in Scotland, together in each case with the 1992 electoral registration figures.

Mr. Allan Stewart *[holding answer 12 May 1992]:* The Registrar General's mid-1991 population estimates are not yet available. Provisional figures, based on the results of the 1991 census, will be prepared by September 1992. Electoral registration figures for 1992 have been published in OPCS Monitors EL 92/1 and EL 92/2 which cover, respectively, parliamentary constituencies and local government areas. Copies of both these publications are held in the Library.

Absent Voting

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland in what forms he holds information on the numbers of postal, proxy and expatriate votes issued and used during the 1987 and 1992 general elections.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Returning officers in Scotland are at present sending information to my right hon. Friend about the numbers of postal votes issued and used during the 1992 general election for eventual publication as part of a House of Commons paper. The information for the 1987 general election is contained in tables 3 and 5 of House of Commons Paper No. 426 of 20 April 1988 "Election Expenses".

In this context, it is not possible to distinguish between postal votes and postal proxy votes which may have been used by overseas voters.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 14 May 1992

NATIONAL FINANCE

Company Cars

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make it his policy to eliminate favourable tax treatment of company cars.

Mr. Dorrell: The Government's policy is that, so far as possible, there should be broad neutrality in the tax treatment of remuneration paid in cash and in kind. In keeping with that policy, the aim has been to ensure that the statutory income tax scale charges realistically reflect the value to an employee of the benefit of the availability of a car for private use. That has involved substantial increases in the level of the scales since 1979.

With a view to further improvements in the neutrality and fairness of the car scales, my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced in his Budget statement that he proposes to introduce price-based scale charges for company cars as soon as practicable. The Inland Revenue will be publishing a consultative document on this in the summer.

Capital Gains Tax

Sir Michael Grylls: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what have been both the revenue produced by capital gains tax and the cost of raising that tax in each of the last three years for which figures are available.

Mr. Nelson: The most recent published figures of capital gains tax yield and the cost of administration for years up to 1990-91 are set out in the table.

£ million

	1987-88	*1988-89*	*[1]1989-90*	*[1]1990-91*
Cost of administration[2]	25·1	26·6	34·3	39·0
Yield	1,379·0	2,323·0	1,854·0	1,852·0

[1] Manpower usage and costs of administration for 1989-90 have been adjusted to reflect a new basis of costing. Direct comparison of these and later figures with those of earlier years may be misleading. More detail regarding this adjustment is given in the board's report for the year ending 31 March 1991.
[2] Costs are based on total departmental expenditure.

Notes:
Capital gains tax receipts in 1991-92 are provisionally estimated at £1,140 million.
The receipts figures quoted exclude tax on gains made by companies included in corporation tax.

Electronic Aids (VAT)

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has had in respect of the removal of VAT from all electronic aids for blind and visually disabled people; and what plans he has to remove VAT from such aids.

Sir John Cope: Treasury Ministers receive occasional individual representations about the liability to VAT of a variety of electronic aids for blind and visually disabled people. There is already relief from VAT for goods designed solely for use by the blind, but there are no plans to extend this relief.

Life Assurance (Tax Rules)

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what changes are proposed to the tax rules for life assurance companies.

Mr. Dorrell: A few life assurance companies are contesting the long-standing interpretation of the law which allows the Inland Revenue to tax the investment return accruing for the benefit of policy holders when the company makes a trading loss. Income and capital gains taxed in this way are reflected in benefits which are received, by most policy holders, without any further tax charge.

If the challenge were successful, the Exchequer cost in the current year would be around £450 million because tax liabilities for a number of past years have not been finalised. The ongoing Exchequer cost would be up to £100 million a year.

Recent reforms of the taxation of life assurance have been designed to remove distortions and differential distributions of the tax burden between companies. The Government believe that the interpretation put forward by the life assurance companies concerned would lead to an uneven incidence of taxation between companies and in the benefits going to policy holders; and awaiting the outcome of the companies' challenge would result in considerable uncertainty, possibly over a period of years.

The Chancellor therefore proposes to bring forward in the forthcoming Finance Bill legislation which will have retrospective effect to confirm the existing long-standing basis of taxing proprietary life assurance companies. It is the Government's intention to introduce a new clause in Committee together with any necessary Ways and Means resolution.

Multinational Companies

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if any changes are proposed to the tax treatment of multinational companies.

Mr. Dorrell: A recent decision of the special commissioners ruled that certain payments made under equity notes—perpetual debt instruments where the loan is not repaid—were interest for tax purposes.

The two main grounds on which the special commissioners gave their decision were that the particular wording of the relevant double taxation agreement did not prevent such payments being interest for the purposes of that agreement and that section 209 of the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988 did not treat such payments as distributions.

If no action were taken there could be a loss to the Exchequer of up to £150 million a year. The Government therefore propose to bring forward legislation in the forthcoming Finance Bill.

The legislation will have two components. First, it will restore the general understanding of certain of the United Kingdom's double taxation agreements to what it was before the decision. Second, it will establish the relevant

domestic law to include payments made under equity notes in the definition of distributions. The legislation will apply to all payments made from midnight tonight.

Treaty of European Union

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what examination his Department has made of the treaty of European union signed at Maastricht for incompatibility with existing EEC law; and what discrepancies have been discovered.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 11 May 1992]:* My Department examined the treaty on European union very thoroughly throughout the negotiations leading to its signature, but since the purpose of the treaty is to add to or amend the provisions of the treaty of Rome, which is the basis of all Community law, the issue of incompatibility with existing EC law does not arise.

HEALTH

Electoral Register

Mr. Lewis: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the number of overseas voters registered for each constituency on the electoral register currently in force.

Mr. Sackville: The information requested has been placed in the Library. It will be included in the publication "1992 Electoral Statistics", series EL No. 19, in the summer.

Mr. Lewis: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the total number of electors registered in each constituency in Greater Manchester *(a)* on the current electoral register and *(b)* on the registers in force for each of the years 1983-84 to 1991-92.

Mr. Sackville: The information requested is given in the table:

Parliamentary electors registered in each constituency in Greater Manchester, 1983 to 1987

Parliamentary constituency	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*
Altrincham and Sale BC	66,838	67,330	67,591	67,775	68,407	68,531	68,284	67,838	67,135	66,985
Ashton under Lyne BC	59,568	59,611	59,217	59,140	59,019	59,168	59,071	59,320	59,221	59,170
Bolton North East BC	59,719	60,286	60,340	59,939	60,149	59,841	59,490	59,782	59,997	59,209
Bolton South East BC	68,394	67,676	67,170	66,879	66,803	66,564	66,117	66,471	66,671	66,245
Bolton West CC	68,221	69,081	69,739	70,208	70,722	70,699	71,448	72,526	72,820	72,067
Bury North BC	66,960	67,553	67,899	68,170	68,830	69,390	69,612	70,411	70,172	70,313
Bury South BC	65,642	65,607	65,681	65,672	65,785	66,154	65,641	66,157	66,122	66,456
Cheadle BC	67,334	67,810	68,456	68,876	69,137	69,434	68,995	68,085	67,276	66,934
Davyhulme BC	65,790	66,153	66,060	66,227	66,331	66,017	65,221	64,449	63,695	63,279
Denton and Reddish BC	69,430	69,612	69,457	69,735	70,218	70,586	70,303	70,041	69,462	69,048
Eccles BC	68,016	67,977	67,502	67,639	67,529	67,179	66,466	66,334	65,760	65,326
Hazel Grove CC	64,348	64,896	65,046	65,499	66,506	66,635	66,309	66,003	65,344	65,034
Heywood and Middleton CC	60,348	60,973	61,204	61,008	60,111	59,451	58,175	58,112	57,697	57,796
Leigh BC	68,764	69,056	68,954	69,407	69,925	70,236	70,257	70,708	70,492	70,706
Littleborough and Saddleworth CC	64,660	65,490	66,257	66,597	66,795	66,446	66,134	66,564	66,316	66,304
Makerfield CC	69,935	70,308	70,850	71,289	71,549	71,637	71,316	71,798	71,803	72,034
Manchester, Blackley BC	60,861	60,814	60,769	60,482	59,799	58,521	56,100	55,669	55,902	55,701
Manchester, Central BC	70,088	68,637	66,903	65,767	64,000	61,374	57,296	56,319	57,176	56,907
Manchester, Gorton BC	65,394	65,183	64,991	65,023	65,221	64,613	62,290	62,380	62,710	62,848
Manchester, Withington BC	65,354	65,407	65,297	66,178	66,295	65,846	64,103	64,054	64,138	64,313
Manchester, Wythenshawe BC	61,876	61,234	60,646	60,314	59,403	57,982	55,903	55,061	54,807	54,045
Oldham Central and Royton BC	67,818	67,309	67,214	66,630	65,845	64,041	62,960	62,840	62,177	61,902
Oldham West BC	58,077	58,428	58,507	58,228	57,698	56,694	55,474	55,252	54,779	54,519
Rochdale BC	67,456	68,158	69,169	69,019	69,477	69,309	69,875	70,127	70,301	70,297
Salford East BC	64,649	63,506	61,089	59,687	58,518	56,925	55,007	54,271	53,199	52,928
Stalybridge and Hyde CC	68,654	68,679	68,405	68,638	68,720	68,452	68,177	68,491	68,739	68,772
Stockport BC	59,389	59,904	59,806	60,292	60,618	60,654	60,219	59,920	58,997	58,558
Stretford BC	58,108	58,593	58,432	58,419	58,246	57,188	55,567	55,013	54,903	54,874
Wigan BC	73,100	72,888	72,584	72,472	72,842	72,989	73,274	73,680	73,506	73,381
Worsley CC	72,941	73,616	73,608	73,721	73,918	74,062	73,660	73,917	72,974	72,841
Total	1,967,731	1,971,775	1,968,843	1,968,929	1,968,416	1,956,618	1,932,744	1,931,593	1,924,291	1,918,792

Note:
BC = Borough constituency
CC = County constituency

Source: Population Estimates Unit, OPCS.

Waiting Lists

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many out-patients were waiting for a first out-patient appointment on 31 March in each individual health authority in England.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not available centrally.

Royal Pharmaceutical Society

Sir John Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if her Department has considered an application for an exhibition relating to the Royal Pharmaceutical Society to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall.

Dr. Mawhinney: Under procedures agreed by the Administration Committee, I understand that arrangements have been made with the authorities of the House for the exhibition to be held in the Upper Waiting Hall from 22 to 26 June.

Agencies

Mr. Elletson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she has identified any further candidates for agency status under the next steps initiative within her Department.

Mr. Sackville: Following a detailed feasibility study, we have identified the Department's NHS superannuation branch as a candidate for executive agency status.

We are confident that the move to agency status will be beneficial, enabling the agency to operate with greater freedom and clearer responsibility within an agreed framework of objectives, performance targets and resources, thus improving the service provided to the pension scheme members.

Detailed discussions on an agency framework document have been set in hand with a view to establishing NHS Pensions as an executive agency in the second half of 1992.

Shigella Sonnei

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what measures her Department is taking to control the current epidemic of shigella sonnei infection in schools; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: Reports of shigella sonnei have recently shown a marked increase in some localities, as previously occurred in 1977 and 1984. Action for dealing with local outbreaks of such diseases is the responsibility of both the environmental health department and the district health authority's consultant in communicable disease control. An environmental health officer will normally visit the school or other establishment affected and provide on the spot advice.

The Public Health Laboratory Service also provides advice and assistance for the control of outbreaks of shigella sonnei via its 52 area and regional public health laboratories. A working group has been established by the PHLS to determine whether further steps might be taken.

Tobacco Advertising

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she now expects to table a motion to the House on the proposed ban on tobacco advertising in EC document 6748/91.

Dr. Mawhinney: The House's scrutiny of this document was not completed before the Dissolution. It will be for the Select Committee on European Legislation, when established, to decide what further scrutiny is required in this Parliament.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Ethnic Minorities

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps he has taken to recruit members of ethnic minorities in top grades of employment at his Department.

Mr. Mates: The home civil service is fully committed to ensuring equality of opportunity for all applicants, including any from ethnic minorities. The Northern Ireland Office is an equal opportunity employer and this is emphasised in all our recruiting campaigns and advertising. If direct recruitment for certain senior posts in the Northern Ireland Office were to be necessary, it would be conducted with guidance from the Civil Service Commission. The Northern Ireland civil service has not taken any specific action to recruit members of ethnic minorities in top grades of employment. All recruitment is on the basis of merit in fair and open competition.

Housing Waiting Lists

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many applicants are on the priority waiting list for homes in the boroughs of *(a)* Ards and *(b)* Castlereagh; and how many new homes are planned by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive in each of the boroughs in 1992, 1993 and 1994, respectively.

Mr. Atkins: This is a matter for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive whose chief executive has advised me that at 30 April 1992 there were 140 applicants in the priority category on the executive's waiting list in the borough of Ards and 109 in Castlereagh. The number of new homes planned by the executive is as follows:

	Ards borough	*Castlereagh borough*
1992-93	146	30
1993-94	133	25
1994-95	129	5

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Seekers Estate Agencies

Mr. Viggers: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will institute an inquiry into the Seekers estate agency franchise business.

Mr. Leigh: I cannot comment on the affairs of individual companies or persons. I am prepared to consider any information the hon. Member may provide which might warrant an inquiry.

Ethnic Minorities

Mr. Janner: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when his Department last conducted a survey of the ethnic origin of its employees; when it next plans to do so; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: Voluntary surveys were last conducted in 1988 (DTI) and 1990 (Department of Energy). The resulting databases have been continuously updated with

information on new staff and leavers. As part of departmental initiatives for action on race, an exercise aimed at improving the positive response rate was conducted in both Departments during 1991-92. A total of 88 per cent. of staff currently employed by the Department —including its executive agencies and the former Department of Energy—have declared their ethnic origin.

Mr. Janner: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many and what percentage of officers in grades 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7, respectively, and overall in his Department are members of ethnic minorities.

Mr. Eggar: The figures for the Department, including its executive agencies and the former Department of Energy, as at 1 January 1992 are—from an 88 per cent. positive response rate to ethnic survey:

Grade level	*Number of respondents*	*Percentage of staff*
Grade 1-4	Nil	—
Grade 5	2	1
Grade 6	6	3
Grade 7	25	2
All respondents, including industrial grades	1,287	9

Renewable Energy

Mr. Dafis: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make it his policy to set a target to ensure that 10 per cent. of total electricity supply stems from renewable sources by the year 2000 within the United Kingdom.

Mr. Eggar: Targets for the exploitation of renewable energy are under consideration as part of the current review of the Government's renewable energy programmes.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list for each year from 1982 to 1992 what financial contribution has been made by industrial sources to the research, development and demonstration programmes for renewable energy run by the energy technology support unit; and if he will break down these figures for each of biofuels, wind power, solar power, small scale hydro, geothermal, tidal power and wave power.

Mr. Eggar: Annual external contributions to the renewable energy research, development and demonstration programme from the private sector, generating boards and the European Commission are listed. A breakdown of the figures by technology is not available.

	Per cent.
1981-82	1·9
1982-83	3·2
1983-84	2·0
1984-85	3·3
1985-86	2·1
1986-87	3·1
1987-88	3·9
1988-89	4·7
1989-90	5·3
1990-91	7·0

A figure for 1991-92 will be available shortly.

Radioactive Substances

Mr. Flynn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what initiatives he intends to make to increase the public access to information on radioactive substances.

Mr. Eggar: It is the Government's policy to assist Parliament and the public by being as open as practicable in relation to information about civil radioactive substances, subject to considerations of security, commercial confidentiality and the costs of preparing the information.

Berkeley Nuclear Power Station

Mr. Flynn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when the defuelling of the Berkeley nuclear power station will be complete; what additional radiation exposures to the work force were incurred during the defuelling; how many fuel rods remain in the spent fuel cooling ponds at the Berkeley site; and what plans exist for the decommissioning of the spent fuel cooling ponds at the site.

Mr. Eggar: This is an operational matter for Nuclear Electric plc.

Nuclear Research and Development

Mr. Flynn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is his policy on the future of the consultation process begun in August 1991 by the Department of Energy, on the review of nuclear research and development programmes.

Mr. Eggar: The consultation process on the review of the nuclear research and development programmes of the Department of Energy—now the Department of Trade and Industry—was completed in October 1991. I intend to publish a strategy for these programmes in due course.

Radioactive Contamination

Mr. Flynn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he has any plans to make an agreement with the Russian Federation to help clean up radioactive contamination at nuclear facilities along the lines of the co-operation agreement signed by his German and Russian counterparts in mid-March.

Mr. Eggar: During a visit to Russia in March, my right hon. Friend the Lord Privy Seal put in hand negotiations with the Ministry of Atomic Energy of the Russian Federation for a framework agreement to encourage technical cooperation on civil nuclear energy. The exact scope has yet to be decided.

Carbon Dioxide Emissions

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what assessment he has made of development of new technologies in coal burning power stations, including combined heat and power, in reducing carbon dioxide emissions over the next 10 years;

(2) what assessment he has made of the contribution of renewable energy over the next seven years towards reducing carbon dioxide emissions;

(3) what assessment he has made of the contribution of gas fired power stations towards reducing carbon dioxide emissions over the next 10 years.

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will publish the background paper concerning the revised forecast of carbon dioxide emission in the United Kingdom for the years 2000 and 2005.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answers 13 May 1992]:* On 6 December 1991 the then Secretary of State for Energy provided the House with the results of further work on scenarios for United Kingdom carbon dioxide emissions. This took account of helpful developments such as proposals for more efficient gas-fired electricity generation and improvements in energy efficiency. Details of these scenarios, including their underlying assumptions, will be published in the near future.

PRIME MINISTER

Whaling Ban

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make it his policy to support a ban on whaling for commercial purposes on a permanent basis at the forthcoming Earth summit.

The Prime Minister: The Earth summit has a full agenda on a range of environmental issues; it will not be the place for detailed consideration of whaling. The United Kingdom has taken a lead in protecting whales and strongly supports the moratorium on commercial whaling, agreed by the International Whaling Commission, which has operated since 1985. The IWC is the proper place to consider the future of the moratorium; it will be discussing the matter at its next meeting in June.

Environmental Impact Assessments

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list those Ministers in each Department responsible for considering the environmental implications of his or her Department's policies and spending programmes; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: An updated list is currently being prepared and will be published as soon as possible.

Iraq

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister what correspondence he has received from Mr. Frank Machon regarding the alleged breach of export control restrictions over the sale of military sensitive materials to Iraq by British companies; and what response he has made.

The Prime Minister: As far as I am aware, the last correspondence from Mr. Machon was received on 21 February 1991 and a reply was made on 26 February.

Cabinet Committees

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Prime Minister if he will now give the names and composition of all Cabinet committees and sub-committees.

The Prime Minister: A full list of ministerial Cabinet committees, with their terms of reference and membership, will be published shortly.

Interception of Communications Act 1985

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Prime Minister when the annual report of the commissioner appointed under the Interception of Communications Act 1985 will be laid before the House; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: A copy of Lord Justice Lloyd's sixth and final report, covering 1991, has been laid before the House today in accordance with section 8(7) of the Interception of Communications Act 1985. The confidential appendix to the report has been excluded from that copy in accordance with section 8(8) of the 1985 Act. I am grateful to the commissioner for his work since 1986 in reviewing the issue of warrants. I note in particular his observations that the Secretaries of State take great care to satisfy themselves that the warrants are necessary for the purposes stated in the Act, and that the system for the issue of warrants is working as intended by Parliament.

Careful consideration is being given to both parts of the commissioner's report.

Engagements

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 14 May.

The Prime Minister: This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Community Radio Stations

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what plans his Department has as to the issue of new community radio station licences; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: The Broadcasting Act 1990 created a framework for the development of a wide range of types and sizes of new independent radio services. Licences are awarded by the Radio Authority.

I am pleased to see that so far the authority has awarded 14 local radio licences and aims to continue to advertise about two further licences each month. During 1991 the authority also issued 178 short-term restricted radio licences, which a number of community groups used for special local events and to gain experience and assess audience reaction to their programmes.

Television Licences

Mr. Skinner: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage whether he will meet representatives of pensioners' organisations to discuss free television licences.

Mr. Key: My right hon. and learned Friend and I consider that no useful purpose would be served by a meeting with representatives of pensioners' organisations to discuss free television licences. Our policy is clear and well-known to the hon. Member. We have no plans to change the present concessionary arrangements.

Free licences for pensioners, irrespective of ability to pay, would deprive the BBC of over £500 million a year.

If the remaining licence holders had to make this up, they would face an increase of over 50 per cent. to more than £120 per annum for a standard licence.

Sports Council

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will make a statement on the proposed restructuring of the Sports Council to form a United Kingdom sports commission and sports council for England, and on the chairmanships of these bodies.

Mr. Mellor: In the policy statement "Sport and Active Recreation", published on 19 December 1991, the Government announced their intention to replace the Sports Council of Great Britain with a United Kingdom sports commission and a sports council for England, subject to the approval, by the Queen in Council, of the royal charters for the two new bodies.

Following the transfer of responsibility for sport and recreation to the Department of National Heritage, the Government remain fully committed to this restructuring. I intend to appoint Peter Yarranton as chairman of the United Kingdom sports commission, and Ian Beer as chairman of the sports council for England. Mr. Yarranton is presently chairman of the Sports Council of Great Britain and will continue in that capacity until the transition to the new arrangements has been effected.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Science Strategy

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he plans to outline his strategy for science; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: The creation of the Office of Science and Technology by the Prime Minister underlines the Government's commitment to a strong science and technology—S and T—base in the United Kingdom. Its establishment will enable me to take an overview of S and T policy from the heart of government. I look forward to taking stock of the United Kingdom's fine record of scientific and technological achievement and of how we might best sustain and develop that in the future.

Myalgic Encephalomyelitis

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he received the interim report from the Institute of Psychiatry about the fatigue aspects of myalgic encephalomyelitis; and what action he is taking.

Mr. Waldegrave *[holding answer 12 May 1992]:* I have received no such report. The Medical Research Council is funding this research. It is not its normal practice to request interim reports from project grant holders and I understand that it has not done so in this case.

DEFENCE

Green Rover

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will review his decision to sell the former Royal Fleet Auxilliary supply ship, the Green Rover, to Indonesia.

Mr. Aitken: The RFA Green Rover is a replenishment ship for fresh water, fuel and refrigerated goods. She has no offensive capability. There are no grounds for reviewing the decision to sell the ship.

Defence Export Services Organisation

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will close the Defence Export Services Organisation in Indonesia.

Mr. Aitken: No.

United Nations Forces

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what British service personnel have been deployed with the United Nations peace-keeping force in Yugoslavia; and what other units have been deployed with this force.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: At the United Nations' request, the United Kingdom is providing three military observers and a field ambulance unit of some 260 personnel for the United Nations peacekeeping force in Yugoslavia. Of these, 41 personnel, including the three military observers, are already in theatre; the main United Kingdom contingent is expected to be deployed by the first week in June. Additionally a platoon of some 40 Royal Engineers may deploy with the field ambulance for about the first two months, to prepare accommodation and services. The total United Nations force of around 14,000 should comprise 12 infantry battalions, 100 military observers, 500 civilian police monitors and service and civilian support personnel.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what additional pay or allowances service personnel deployed on United Nations duties in *(a)* Yugoslavia and *(b)* Cambodia will receive.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Military personnel deployed in support of the United Nations do not receive additional pay and allowances other than the standard daily separation payment for those married unaccompanied personnel who qualify under normal service regulations. It is normal practice for the United Nations to meet service men's in-country costs direct but where this cannot be done, a United Nations mission subsistence allowance is paid either to the unit or, as in the case of Cambodia, direct to the individual to meet the extra cost of living in-theatre. The daily United Nations subsistence rate for Cambodia is US$110 per man.

Ceremonial Duties and Uniforms

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he has any plans to acquire further information about the costs of *(a)* ceremonial duties and *(b)* ceremonial uniforms.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No.

Equipment Orders

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his policy relating to the release of information on in-service dates for equipment currently on order.

Mr. Aitken: The forecast in-service date of equipment will normally be unclassified. Although it is my

Department's policy to be as open as possible about these matters, there are two categories of exception to this rule. The first is when the release of a forecast in-service date may constitute an intelligence advantage to a potential enemy. The second is when the release of the in-service date of equipment procured collaboratively is the subject of an international agreement with our partners.

North Atlantic Treaty Organisation

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions he has had with his United States counterpart regarding the strengthening of the European contribution to the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My right hon. and learned Friend met his United States counterpart in Washington on 11 and 12 May. They discussed a wide range of current defence topics.

Ethnic Monitoring

Mr. Heald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what his Department's review of the policy relating to ethnic monitoring within the armed forces has been completed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The armed forces are equal opportunity employers under the Race Relations Act 1976 and have undertaken a range of measures to increase recruitment from ethnic minority communities. To underline our commitment to equal opportunities for all ethnic groups, we have now decided to extend to serving personnel our present practice of monitoring the ethnic origins of applicants to join the armed forces. The information gathered will be used solely for monitoring our equal opportunity policy and individual's ethnic records will be guaranteed confidentiality. We have set further work in hand to draw up detailed proposals for a monitoring scheme. We intend that this will be implemented as soon as practicable.

EDUCATION

National Curriculum

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what response he has made to the report of the Engineering Council on technology within the national curriculum; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: I welcome the Engineering Council's report as a useful contribution to the monitoring and review of the implementation of the national curriculum order on technology.

The National Curriculum Council keeps all the national curriculum subjects orders—including that for technology—under review and advises the Secretary of State accordingly. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will consider any such advice and make a statement in due course.

School Cleaning

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what steps his Department is taking to ensure that school cleaning is not compromised by the local management of schools; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: I see no reason why school cleaning should be compromised by local management of schools. Local education authorities are required to delegate funds for cleaning by April 1993 or as initial contracts expire, using a formula which is clear and objective. It will then be for governors to decide the level of cleaning they wish to have at their school. Some LEAs have already delegated those funds to schools and I am aware of no evidence to suggest that the quality of school cleaning is being adversely affected.

SCOTLAND

Coastal Protection

Mr. Clifford Forsythe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any plans to tighten the laws preventing the exploitation of the natural assets and wildlife of the seashore by private extraction companies.

Sir Hector Monro: The general principles which the Government pursue in relation to environmental issues are set out in the White Paper on the Environment "This Common Inheritance" (Cm 1200). The Government memorandum to the Environment Committee of the House of Commons, Session 1991-92, sets out the comprehensive nature of the present arrangements for protection of the coast.

The second report of the Environment Committee on coastal zone protection and planning (No. 17) is still under consideration and the Government response will be made in due course.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what assessment he has made over the last decade of the damage to estuaries, its implications for estuarial flora and fauna, as well as adherence to international wildlife conventions; and whether he has any proposals for the protection and improvement of estuaries.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 13 May 1992]*: The general principles which the Government pursue in relation to environmental issues laid down out in the White Paper on the Environment "This Common Inheritance" (Cm. 1200). The Government memorandum to the Environment Committee of the House of Commons, Session 1991-92, sets out the comprehensive nature of the present arrangements for protection of the coast.

The second report of the Environment Committee on Coastal Zone Protection and Planning (No. 17) is still under consideration and the Government response will be made in due course.

In 1991, the Nature Conservancy Council (NCC), the Government's adviser on nature conservation issues, published a major report "Nature Conservation and Estuaries in Great Britain". Scottish Natural Heritage—the successor organisation to the NCC in Scotland with effect from 1 April 1992—is taking forward the report's findings and proposals at local level to identify priority estuaries and action required. It is for Scottish Natural Heritage to consider which estuarial sites require to be notified as sites of special scientific interest and to make recommendations to my right hon. Friend for the designation of sites in fulfilment of the United Kingdom's international nature conservation obligations.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what proposals he has to improve the protection of the coastline and offshore waters; and when he expects to implement them.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 13 May 1992]:* The general principles which the Government pursue in relation to environmental issues are set out in the White Paper on the Environment "This Common Inheritance" (Cm 1200). The Government memorandum to the Environment Committee of the House of Commons, Session 1991-92, sets out the comprehensive nature of the present arrangements for protection of the coast.

The second report of the Environment Committee on coastal zone protection and planning (No. 17) is still under consideration and the Government response will be made in due course.

Lockerbie Bombing

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on his policy towards the release of official information relating to the Lockerbie air explosion investigation in cases where the information has already become public.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: It is generally for the Lord Advocate to determine, after consultation with any relevant Minister in the case of official information, whether information from the criminal investigation relating to the Lockerbie disaster should be released. The question whether public interest immunity restrains the giving of evidence when material relating to the Lockerbie investigation has become public or has apparently become public is one which is expected to be considered in proceedings currently before the High Court of Justice arising from the civil litigation in the United States in the Lockerbie case.

Sir Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps the police inquiring into the Lockerbie bombing incident have taken to seek information on the lie detecting tests undertaken by Kilin Tuzcu and Roland O'Neill at Frankfurt airport in January 1990; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The circumstances of this matter were investigated by the German and United States authorities in consultation with the police and Crown Office. It would not be proper for any comment to be made on behalf of the Lord Advocate on the outcome of these inquiries, in particular while criminal proceedings are active. However, it has been established judicially in Scotland that the results of so-called lie detector tests are wholly inadmissible in criminal proceedings.

Immunity Certificates

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement about the criteria on which his office and the Lord Advocate will base a decision to issue a public interest immunity certificate in relation to proceedings before the courts.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Public interest immunity is claimed where the Secretary of State or the Lord Advocate considers that it would be injurious to the public interest for particular matters to be the subject of evidence. The particular interest to be protected will vary according to the particular circumstances of the case.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he intends to take capping action against any Scottish local authority in the current year.

Mr. Lang: I have now analysed the 1992-93 budget estimates of all Scottish local authorities. All authorities have budgeted at or below the expenditure limits implied by the provisional capping principles which I announced on 14 October 1991. In these circumstances, I do not propose to take capping action against any Scottish local authority this year.

Overall, authorities plan to increase their expenditure in 1992-93—as compared with the budget estimates for 1991-92—by 5·6 per cent. and the excess of budgets over grant-aided expenditure (GAE) has been reduced from 2·1 per cent. in 1991-92 to 1·2 per cent. this year. This outcome demonstrates the effectiveness of my strengthened capping powers in constraining the growth in local authority expenditure and it is my intention to issue later this year provisional capping principles for 1993-94.

Home Grown Timber Advisory Committee

Mr. Kynoch: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans there are for improving the environmental representation on the Home Grown Timber Advisory Committee.

Sir Hector Monro: The Home Grown Timber Advisory Committee (HGTAC) is the principal statutory body responsible for advising the Forestry Commissioners on forestry matters in Great Britain. The HGTAC already has two members representing environmental interests, and I am pleased to announce that it has now decided to set up a sub-committee to provide a wider forum for informed and constructive consideration of the environmental aspects of forestry. The HGTAC has invited leading representatives from environmental organisations and the forestry industry to become members of the sub-committee. We greatly welcome this initiative, which should further improve understanding between the interests concerned and assist the Forestry Commissioners in fulfilling their statutory duty to balance the needs of productive forestry with those of the environment.

Environmental Impact Assessments

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many environmental impact assessments have been presented with planning applications in each of the last three years; and what assessment has been made of their compliance with the European Community directive on environmental impact assessment.

Mr. Allan Stewart *[holding answer 13 May 1992]:* The number of environmental statements which have been notified to the Scottish Office is as follows:

	Number
15 July 1988 to 14 July 1989	7
15 July 1989 to 14 July 1990	17
15 July 1990 to 14 July 1991	26

The planning authority to which the planning application is made is the competent authority for the purposes of European Community directive 85/337/EC on

environmental assessment. It is the responsibility of that authority to ensure that an environmental statement meets all relevent requirements as part of the process of considering the associated planning application. Where an application is the subject of an appeal, or is called-in, the responsibility transfers to my right hon. Friend.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Ethnic Minorities

Mr. Janner: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he has taken to recruit members of ethnic minorities in top grades of employment at his Department.

Mr. Curry: Recruitment to senior grades is undertaken by the Recruitment and Assessment Services Agency on behalf of the Civil Service Commissioners. Recruitment to all posts in the Civil Service is conditioned by the principle of fair and open competition. Steps have been taken in publicising opportunities and through making recruitment rules more flexible to help tap the ethnic minority work force.

Forestry Policy

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he received proposals from Wildlife Link on environmentally based forestry policy for the 1990s.

Mr. Curry: I received a copy of Wildlife Link's report "Future Forestry: A New Direction for Forest Policy" at the end of April.

Animal Welfare

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what standards he will press the EC to adopt in relation to *(a)* keeping of battery hens, particularly with respect to size of cage and *(b)* care of animals in transit, particularly with respect to feeding and watering intervals for such animals; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: The Government believe that the current Community minimum standards for battery cages are unacceptable. We shall be arguing for a substantial increase in space allowances for each hen and other improvements to the cages together with the highest possible standards for alternative systems. We are now awaiting the report and conclusions of the Commission's review of egg-laying systems.

On transport of animals, we will be pressing for the excellent rules which apply in the United Kingdom to be reflected in the further decisions to be taken by the Community.

Marine Environment

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make it his policy to press for the amendment of the common fisheries policy to ensure that all decisions taken under the policy take into account the prevention of effects of ecosystems and marine wildlife.

Mr. Curry: The Government are most concerned to seek the avoidance of incidental catches of marine mammals. In the context of the new agreement under the Bonn convention, we shall be seeking to monitor further the small cetacean populations in the North sea and the Baltic and the impact of fisheries.

Chernobyl

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what estimate he has made of the length of time that will have to pass before there will be no restriction on the movement of farm animals arising from high levels of radioactive contamination following the Chernobyl disaster in 1986.

Mr. Curry: While it is not possible to say when all restrictions on sheep from the parts of Cumbria affected by the Chernobyl accident will finally be lifted, considerable progress has been made since 1986. Only 138 of the 1,670 holdings originally subject to controls remain under restriction. We are continuing our monitoring and research efforts with the aim of releasing the remaining area at the earliest opportunity consistent with the need to ensure that the food chain remains fully protected.

I will be reviewing the results later this year and considering the possibility of further relaxation of restrictions. In the meantime, we shall continue with our "mark and release" and compensation arrangements which allow normal farming practices with minimum disruption.

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

High Court Proceedings

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will outline the provisions relating to the circumstances in which proceedings in the High Court may be held in camera.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The hearing of civil or family proceedings to which the public would normally be admitted may be held in camera only where, in the opinion of the court, a public hearing would defeat the ends of justice. In criminal proceedings, a prosecutor or a defendant may apply to the court for all or part of a trial to be held in camera for reasons of national security or the protection of a witness or other person.

"On the Trail of Terror"

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what consideration the Lord Chancellor has given to the book "On the Trail of Terror," a copy of which has been sent to him; and what assessment he has now made of the Adjournment debate of 20 January, *Official Report*, column 153, initiated by the hon. Member for Linlithgow, in respect of the references to the documents referred to in the book.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Lord Chancellor has not yet received a copy of the book "On the Trail of Terror", and has not therefore had an opportunity to consider it. The Adjournment debate, to which the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, replied, does not appear to raise issues within the Lord Chancellor's responsibility.

Social Security Commissioner

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if the Lord Chancellor will take steps towards the appointment of a social security commissioner resident in Wales.

Mr. John M. Taylor: No. The Cardiff office of the social security commissioner was closed in 1986 as there were insufficient hearings to justify its full-time status. The present arrangements for regular hearings in Cardiff by a visiting commissioner adequately meet present demands.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Income Support

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will restore the income support entitlement of young people aged 16 and 17 years.

Mr. Burt: The Government's policy of providing a guarantee of a youth training (YT) place to all young people who want one, instead of their depending on social security benefits, is the most effective way of encouraging young people to make the most of their opportunities. However, income support is available to those vulnerable groups of young people who are unable to participate in YT and to those seeking a YT place who would otherwise be at risk of severe hardship. We have no plans to restore general entitlement to income support, but we are monitoring closely the operation of these rules with a view to streamlining their administration where possible.

Disability Allowances

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many applications for the disability living allowance have been received by his Department; and if he will provide a breakdown by *(a)* the number and percentage of these that resulted in an award, *(b)* the number and percentage that were refused and *(c)* the number and percentage refused by grounds for refusal.

Mr. Scott: The total number of new claims received by 30 April 1992 was 130,262.

	(i) Number	*(ii) As percentage of new claims decided per cent.*
Number of new claims decided[1]	29,453	
Awards and refusals made on new claims		
Awards	17,562	59·6
Refusals	11,891	40·4
Grounds for refusal		
Disability conditions not satisfied	3,853	13·08
Other[2]	8,033	27·27

[1] Excluding claims from people already in receipt of mobility allowance or attendance allowance.
[2] Includes age and residence and presence conditions.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many applications have been received for the disability working allowance; and if he will provide a breakdown by *(a)* the number and percentage of these that resulted in an award, *(b)* the number and percentage that were refused and *(c)* the number and percentage refused by grounds for refusal.

Mr. Scott: Disability working allowance is a new benefit introduced in April for some disabled people who work but have limited earning capacity. Up to 8 May, 9,017 claims had been received. Of these, 588, or 6·5 per cent. resulted in an award and 7,188, or 79·7 per cent. were unsuccessful. The grounds for refusing benefit in the unsuccessful cases were as follows:

	Number	*Per cent.*
Claimant not in remunerative work	4,230	58·8
Earnings above limit	471	6·6
No "qualifying" benefit	2,000	27·8
Claimant receiving family credit	173	2·4
Other reasons	314	4·4

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will provide a breakdown by *(a)* average hourly earnings, *(b)* average hours worked, *(c)* average age, *(d)* sex, *(e)* type of disability and *(f)* qualifying benefit of (i) successful and (ii) unsuccessful applications received for disability working allowance.

Mr. Scott: Not all the information is available. Such information as is available is in the table and is derived from a provisional analysis of the claims received up to 12 May.

	Recipients	*Unsuccessful Claims*
Average number of hours worked	29	Not available
Average age	35	42
Sex—men	332	4,658
women	276	2,774
Qualifying benefits:		Not available
Invalidity benefit	60	
Severe disablement allowance	32	
Income support with disability premium	88	
Housing benefit with disability premium	52	
Disability living allowance	64	
Mobility allowance, attendance Allowance and other benefits	492	

Note: Customers may have more than one qualifying benefit.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the number and outcome of applications received for *(a)* the lower rate care component or *(b)* the lower rate mobility component of the disability living allowance broken down by (i) people previously in receipt of either attendance allowance or mobility allowance and (ii) people not previously in receipt of either of these two benefits.

Mr. Scott: In general, claims for disability living allowance are made for the benefit as a whole, rather than for individual rates of components—although customers may choose to supply details about only one of the two components if they wish. An adjudication officer then determines whether there is entitlement to the benefit and, if so, at which rate or rates.

Initial statistics show that by 30 April 1992 the number of people who were not previously in receipt of either mobility allowance or attendance allowance and had been awarded either one or both of the new lower rate components was 10,392. In addition, there were

respectively 4,786 lower rate mobility awards and 1,406 lower rate care awards made to people previously in receipt of attendance allowance and mobility allowance.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many applications for the mobility component of the disability living allowance were received in February, March and April 1992 *(a)* from people aged 66 years or over and *(b)* in respect of children under five years of age; and how many applications for the mobility allowance were received in February, March and April 1991 (i) from people aged 66 years or over and (ii) in respect of children under five years of age.

Mr. Scott: The requested information about the number of applications received for the mobility component of disability living allowance is not available.

The number of claims for mobility allowance received in February, March and April 1991 from people aged 66 and over and in respect of children under five is in the table:

Month	*Number of claims*
February 1991	967
March 1991	1,084
April 1991	1,256
Total	3,307

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many applications for the care component of the disability living allowance have been received from people aged 66 years or over.

Mr. Scott: In general, claims for disability living allowance are made for the benefit as a whole, rather than for individual components—although customers may choose to supply details about only one of the two components if they wish. An adjudication officer then determines whether there is entitlement to the benefit and, if so, at which rate or rates. The information requested is not available.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what number and proportion of all applications for the disability living allowance were either *(a)* from a claimant who has requested a medical examination in preference to completing the self-assessment claim form or *(b)* where the adjudication officer has required a claimant to undergo a medical examination.

Mr. Scott: The information is not available in the form requested. However, as at 1 May 1992, out of a total of 29,453 disability living allowance claims decided, 1,305, or 4 per cent., included, as part of the evidence before the adjudication officer, a report by an examining medical practitioner.

Independent Living Fund

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to replace the independent living fund after June 1993; and if applications to the fund will continue to be accepted up to and including June 1993.

Mr. Scott: The independent living fund will continue to make new awards until the end of the current financial year. From April 1993 local authorities, which are best placed to assess need and allocate local resources, will be responsible—in conjunction with users, carers and other interested agencies—for assessing individual needs and arranging flexible and innovative care packages under the community care arrangements. We are, however, committed to maintaining after that date a fund which supports the most severely disabled people. Details of these arrangements will be announced in due course.

Appeal Tribunals (Waiting Times)

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what was the average waiting time for appeals to the social security appeal tribunal in *(a)* 1989, *(b)* 1990 and *(c)* 1991;

(2) what was the average waiting time for appeals from *(a)* Orkney claimants and *(b)* Shetland claimants to the social security appeals tribunal in (i) 1989, (ii) 1990 and (iii) 1991.

Mr. Burt: Administrative statistics for social security appeal tribunals are not available for areas smaller than a former social security region. The relevant information for the former Scotland region and Great Britain is in the table. For both, the latest information available is for the first six months of 1991.

Average waiting time from lodgement of an appeal to the date of hearing for all appeals to social security appeal tribunals:

Year	*Great Britain weeks*	*Scotland weeks*
1989	25·4	28·4
1990	23·1	20·4
January to June 1991	23·6	22·3

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the frequency of sittings of the social security appeal tribunal in *(a)* Kirkwall and *(b)* Lerwick in (i) 1989, (ii) 1990 and (iii) 1991.

Mr. Burt: Responsibility for the administration of social security appeal tribunals lies with the president of the independent tribunal service, His Honour Judge Holden, and the hon. Member may wish to contact his office direct to obtain this information.

Pensioners

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what increases are to be paid to pensioners annually.

Miss Widdecombe: We are committed to uprating retirement pensions annually in line with price increases. Additionally, pensioners in receipt of income support and some other benefits will find these reviewed annually.

WALES

Ethnic Minorities

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when his Department last conducted a survey of the ethnic origin of its employees; when it next plans to do so; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: My Department carried out a survey of the ethnic origin of its employees in May 1988. The

ethnic origin of all new entrants and leavers is monitored and there is no need for another survey. Since 1990, my Department has concentrated on the implementation of a programme of action to consolidate the equality of opportunity offered to people of ethnic minority origin.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what steps he has taken to recruit members of ethnic minorities in top grades of employment at his Department.

Mr. David Hunt: The Recruitment and Assessment Services Agency, acting on behalf of the civil service commissioners, is responsible for most recruitment into senior grades in my Department. It has taken a number of steps to encourage applications from and aid recruitment of members of ethnic minorities. Those include increasing contacts with minority communities; extending links with polytechnics, universities and tertiary colleges to attract a wider range of applicants generally, and specifically from ethnic minority communities; increasing ethnic minority representation among careers liaison staff and on selection panels; ensuring that relevant recruitment literature reflects a multiracial work force; equal opportunities training for those involved in selection; and using validated selection procedures to ensure that selection is fair and non-discriminatory.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many and what percentage of officers in grades 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7, respectively, and overall in his Department are members of ethnic minorities.

Mr. David Hunt: The details, based on staff in post figures at 31 March 1992, are given in the table:

	Number	*Per cent*
Grades 1-6	—	—
Grade 7 (1)	2	1·2
Department Total (2)	32	1·3

(1) Includes equivalent professional grades
(2) Includes agency and industrial staff. Part-time staff each count as one unit.

Nuclear Accidents

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what emergency provisions exist for south Wales in the event of a total breach of containment taking place at *(a)* reactors and *(b)* spent fuel cooling ponds at (i) Berkeley, (ii) Oldbury and (iii) Hinkley Point nuclear plants.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The rigorous safety arrangements at United Kingdom nuclear sites render extremely unlikely the kind of nuclear emergency postulated. Co-ordinated plans based on the worst case scenario which can reasonably be predicted have been devised by the operators of the nuclear sites on Severnside in consultation with the police, local authorities and other emergency services, and also involve liaison with central Government Departments, including the Welsh Office. Those procedures, which are regularly tested in simulated exercises, entail measures to safeguard public health and to protect food and water supplies on both sides of the Severn estuary.

Development Area Status (Pembrokeshire)

Mr. Aleger: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will support appeals by Preseli Pembrokeshire district council and Dyfed county council to give Fishguard and Haverfordwest travel-to-work areas development area status.

Mr. David Hunt: The Government announced before the election that a review of the assisted area map would be conducted in this Parliament. We are now considering how to take that forward. The needs and problems of all areas will be fully taken into account during the course of the review.

Student Loans

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will take steps to ensure that the application form and all information concerning student loans are available in the Welsh language.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The responsibility for student support matters rests with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education. I am in touch with him about producing more of the literature on student support matters, including student loans, in the Welsh language.

Countryside

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he has any new proposals for protecting the countryside.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Any new proposals for protecting the countryside will be announced at the appropriate time. "The Rural Initiative", which was published by my right hon. Friend last December, included a number of relevant proposals, including plans for a countryside stewardship scheme "Tir Cymen", being developed by the Countryside Council for Wales.

Youth Training

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many new youth training places he is providing and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: The numbers of youth training places provided are the responsibility of the training and enterprise councils. Under the terms of their operating agreements and contracts TECs are obliged to offer a training place to every 16 and 17-year-old not in full-time education who seeks one.

Household Waste

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what steps are being taken to meet the target of recycling 25 per cent. of all household waste by the end of the century; and if he will make a statement outlining the present percentage of household waste that is recycled in Wales and by how much it has changed since 1990.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The measures being taken nationally to promote recycling are outlined in the first year report on the Environment White Paper, "This Common Inheritance" (Cm 1655).

In Wales the action taken comprises: guidance to local authorities on devising and implementing recycling

strategies in the form of waste management paper No. 28; a request to authorities to submit recycling plans by 1 August in accordance with section 49 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990; the introduction of a system of recycling credits under section 52 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 — together with associated advice and guidance to authorities on the scheme in the form of Welsh Office circular 10/92.

Reliable estimates of the percentage of household waste that is recycled in Wales are not available, but steps are being taken nationally to obtain more accurate data.

School Leavers

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what new policies he intends to adopt to ensure that school leavers without a job obtain employment.

Mr. David Hunt: The careers service and the employment service offer help to school leavers who wish to take up employment. School leavers need the opportunity to acquire skills and qualifications if they are to take their place successfully in the labour market, and all 16 and 17-year-olds leaving full-time education are entitled to a youth training place. By 1996, all such 16 and 17-year-old leavers will be able to claim a training credit, and the value of the training credit will be an incentive to employers to engage them.

Radiotherapy

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he expects his detailed radiotherapy facilities appraisal for north Wales to report; who are the members of the appraisal committee; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: The investment appraisal of the options available for the establishment of a dedicated cancer treatment centre, including radiotherapy facilities, in north Wales is to be conducted by independent consultants. I expect them to report their conclusions by the end of 1992.

INMOS

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what action he has taken to recover from the INMOS company, Newport sums of money paid to them by the Welsh Office or the Welsh development agency.

Mr. David Hunt: Such information must be treated as commercial in confidence.

Chernobyl

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what estimate he has made of the length of time that will have to pass before there will be no restriction on the movement of farm animals arising from the high levels of radioactive contamination following the Chernobyl disaster in 1986.

Mr. David Hunt: It is not possible to estimate how long radioactivity from the Chernobyl nuclear accident will require the maintaining of controls on the sale of and movement of sheep from the restricted area of Wales. However, our "mark and release" arrangements and associated compensation payments are designed to ensure the minimum disruption to normal farming practices while controls remain in force.

Following intensive monitoring and assessment programmes, I was able to lift controls from two small areas in Gwynedd and Clwyd last year. We are continuing with those types of programmes with a view to lifting controls in further parts of the remaining restricted area as soon as it is possible to do so without compromising food safety.

Pembroke Power Station

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will order a full public inquiry into the proposals to change from the burning of oil at Pembroke power station to the burning of orimulsion; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: National Power requires two separate approvals in order to proceed with its plans—from the Department of Trade and Industry for planning permission to extend the power station, and from Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution for authorisation to burn orimulsion fuel. Those applications are under consideration. The planning procedures allow for the holding of a public inquiry and this is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Rod Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he intends to charge-cap any Welsh authorities for 1992-93; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: I have carefully scrutinised all Welsh local authority budgets for 1992-93. I have decided in all the circumstances not to exercise my capping powers.

Most authorities have repaid the confidence which I placed in them by budgeting in line with the settlement. A few authorities could have done better. I therefore intend to announce provisional capping criteria in the autumn, in advance of the 1993-94 local government budgetary round. This will assist authorities as they take their budgetary decisions next year.

TRANSPORT

Runway Capacity

Mrs. Roe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what progress is being made by the working group, chaired by his Department, which is taking forward the Civil Aviation Authority's advice on south-east runway capacity in the longer term.

Mr. Norris: The working group is making good progress. It was established to consider the wider implications of runway development at 10 airports which had been identified by the Civil Aviation Authority, in its report CAP 570 published in July 1990, as potentially able in air traffic control terms to handle growth in south-east air traffic forecast after 2005, and to consider the regional airport contribution. It draws its membership widely from industry, environmental, local authority and consumer interests, as well as from central Government.

The working group has carried out a substantial volume of work but has a considerable amount remaining and does not expect to be in a position to offer advice before the end of this year. Its report will be published. Runway Capacity to Serve the South-East—RUCATSE

—is not a decision-making body or an alternative to the normal planning processes, and it is not preparing actual development proposals. Before there could be a major runway development at any airport, a promoter would need to work up a specific detailed proposal and apply for planning permission in the usual way, with opportunity for anyone wishing to comment to do so.

By July the group expects to have taken a view on which options should be taken forward for detailed study in its further work. At that point it proposes to undertake further consultation on the notional runway alignments which would appear most suitable for those sites.

Irradiated Nuclear Fuel

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the implications for his Department of the resolution passed on the sea transport of irradiated nuclear fuel at the marine safety committee of the International Maritime Organisation at its 60th annual conference in London in April.

Mr. Norris: The maritime safety committee of the International Maritime Organisation did not pass a resolution on the sea transport of irradiated nuclear fuel at its 60th session. The draft code on the carriage of INF is subject to consultation between the IMO and the International Atomic Energy Agency.

Foreign Vessels

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give the numbers of *(a)* Spanish and *(b)* Dutch vessels registered as British and the ports of registration.

Mr. Norris: For ships and large pleasure craft the information requested is as follows:

(a) Three, at Yarmouth, London and Poole;
(b) Four, at London (2), Harwich and Southampton.

Some 46 Spanish and about 15 Dutch owned fishing vessels have been registered since the European Court judgment referred to in my answer to the hon. Member on 11 May, *Official Report*, column *17*. The majority of these vessels are registered in the south-west ports, Lowestoft and Grimsby, and Aberdeen in Scotland.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many foreign fishing boats are registered as nationals in *(a)* England, *(b)* Scotland, *(c)* Denmark, *(d)* Holland and *(e)* France.

Mr. Norris: Some 65 since the European Court judgment; seven in Scotland, the remainder in England and Wales.

I have no information on registration in other EC countries.

London Bus Services

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representation he has received from the London tourist board concerning his proposals to privatise and deregulate London bus services.

Mr. Norris: Like many other bodies, the London tourist board responded to the consultation paper "A Bus Strategy for London" last year. I am not aware of any subsequent representations from it.

Radioactive Aggregate

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether any radioactively contaminated rubble or spoil has been used as aggregate for the construction of roads in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Maclean: I have been asked to reply.

The disposal of radioactive waste or material of any kind contaminated with radioactivity in England and Wales is subject to authorisation by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution under the Radioactive Substances Act 1960. There have been no cases where this authorisation process has permitted disposal of such waste for use as road building materials. The control of radioactive material and waste in Scotland and Northern Ireland is the responsibility of my right hon. Friends the respective Secretaries of State.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

EC Treaties

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs by what means he intends to notify the appropriate authorities of the ratification of titles I-VII of the draft treaty on economic union; and if he will list the relevant means and authority in respect of each of those draft titles and the subsequent protocols and declarations.

Mr. Garel-Jones: Provided that Parliament has passed the necessary legislation, I shall deposit with the Italian Government an instrument of ratification in accordance with article R of the treaty of European union. The ratification will relate to the treaty documents signed on 7 February, namely, the treaty and the protocols. The declarations are not part of the treaty. There is no procedure for ratifying different parts of the treaty.

Macedonia

Mr. David Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on relations with the Republic of Macedonia.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We and our European Community partners have not yet recognised the Republic of Macedonia. We hope that a common position can soon be found so that recognition can go ahead. We fully support President Gligorov's moderate Government.

Foreign Affairs Council

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the matters discussed and decisions taken at the European Foreign Affairs Council held in Guimares on 1 and 2 May.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The main subjects discussed by EC Foreign Ministers at the informal Foreign Ministers meeting in Guimares on 1 to 2 May were the situation in Yugoslavia, the evolution of the middle east peace process, preparations for the implementation of the common foreign and security policy provided for in the Maastricht treaty, the situation in South Africa and the EC's relations with Turkey. EC Ministers also agreed the solemn declaration on the protocol on the right to life of the unborn in Ireland and had a meeting with the Foreign Ministers of Brazil, Argentina, Paraguay and Uruguay.

World Commission on Culture and Development

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what contribution he intends to make to the World Commission on Culture and Development under the chairpersonship of Mr. Perez de Cuellar when it opens its three-year inquiry in the summer.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We welcome the appointment of Mr. Perez de Cuellar as chairman of the World Commission on Culture and Development, but we have no plans to make a contribution at this stage.

Cyprus

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions have taken place with the United Nations regarding future British contributions to United Nations operations in Cyprus.

Mr. Garel-Jones: We are in regular contact with the United Nations secretariat and other contributors about the United Nations peacekeeping force in Cyprus. It plays a valuable role in preserving the peace, thereby assisting the Secretary-General's efforts to bring about a just and lasting settlement. The size of the force remains under review.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to reduce the British contribution to United Nations operations in Cyprus.

Mr. Garel-Jones: We are in regular contact with the United Kingdom secretariat and other contributors about the United Nations peacekeeping force in Cyprus. It plays a valuable role in preserving the peace, thereby assisting the Secretary-General's efforts to bring about a just and lasting settlement. The size of the force remains under review.

UN Economic Commission for Europe

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what contribution the United Kingdom has made to the forty-seventh session of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe since it opened in Geneva on 7 April.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The United Kingdom was represented at the 47th session of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe by the ambassador and permanent representative of the United Kingdom mission to the United Nations at Geneva, supported by others in the United Kingdom mission and a member of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. Those representatives participated in the plenary and sessional committee proceedings of the 47th session and in concurrent informal negotiations on the drafting of decisions sponsored by the European Community and by non-EC member countries of UNECE. They also played and active part in the drafting of statements made by the Portuguese presidency, on behalf of the European Community and its member states.

Iraq

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will set out the range of weapons in Iraq in each category which have now been destroyed arising from resolutions of the United Nations Security Council; what weapons are now left to be destroyed; when this will occur; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Inspectors have so far supervised the destruction of:

Ballistic Missiles
- 62 ballistic missiles
- 10 ballistic missiles
- 18 fixed scud launch pads
- 32 ballistic missile warheads
- 127 missile storage support vehicles
- Tons of rocket fuel
- Assembled 350 mm supergun
- Components for 350 mm and 1000 mm superguns
- 1 tonne of supergun propellant
- 54 items of ballistic missile production equipment
- 10 buildings related to ballistic missile production

Chemical Weapons
- 11 800 unfilled chemical munitions
- 463 unstable 122 mm rockets, some filled with chemical agent

Nuclear Programme
- 29 items of equipment connected to the nuclear weaponisation programme
- 8 buildings used in the nuclear programme

Iraq claims to have unilaterally destroyed equipment covered by SCR687 during the summer of 1991. The special commission is verifying these claims.

The special commission plans to continue the destruction of nuclear facilities and ballistic missile production equipment in the course of upcoming inspections. The large scale destruction of chemicals will begin in June.

Until Iraq complies with its obligation to provide a full, final and complete disclosure of its weapons of mass destruction, there can be no final list of items for destruction.

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what latest warnings have been given to the Iraqi regime over any future aggression or armed action against its own citizens within the borders of Iraq.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: On 14 April, coalition Governments told the Iraq Government that they should cease repressive actions against the people of Iraq in violation of United Nations Security Council resolution 688.

In a further démarche on 7 May we reminded the Iraqis that we had not received and still expected a full and effective response to our démarche of 14 April. We shall continue to press them to respect the basic human and political rights of the Iraqi people.

Iran

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the state of current relations between Iran and the United Kingdom.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We hope that relations with Iran will evolve in a positive direction. But as the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs told the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman)

"There will be no dramatic or immediate change"—[*Official Report*, 18 December 1991; Vol 201, c. 259.]

in the relationship. In our contacts with the Iranian authorities we continue to make clear that the death sentence on Salman Rushdie is an unacceptable infringement of his rights as a British citizen.

Security

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if the workers employed at the Regalian building site at Vauxhall Cross, which will be occupied by his Department, have been security vetted.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: It is not usual or sensible to comment on security measures taken at Government buildings.

BCCI

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what consideration he has given to the Abu Dhabi Government's proposals for the settlement of the Bank of Credit and Commerce International issue; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Government recognise the difficulties and hardship the BCCI crisis has created for depositors. The Government have stated that they would like to see the depositors get back as much of their money as possible. We have repeatedly made it clear that the Government are not a party to the proposed settlement. It is for the creditors and courts to judge the merits of the proposals put forward by the liquidators and majority shareholders.

Teheran

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action he has taken following the execution in Evin prison in Teheran on 18 March of the leading Baha'i, Mr. Bahman Samandari; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We are concerned by reports about the execution of Mr. Samandari. We hope that the EC presidency will soon make a démarche, on behalf of the Twelve, to the Iranians. Actions like that will only reinforce international concern at the human rights situation in Iran.

Lockerbie Bombing

Sir Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what requests for information and documents relating to the Lockerbie bombing have been put to, or referred to Her Majesty's Government or its agencies in connection with the legal case in the USA involving Pan Am and relatives of persons killed in the bombing; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Requests, both formal and informal, have been received for a number of Crown servants, a former Crown servant and police officers to be made available as witnesses in connection with the civil case in the United States. Those persons have been made available for giving evidence in the United Kingdom, subject to restrictions and conditions designed to ensure that national security and the criminal investigation and proceedings are not prejudiced. A request for the examination of a journalist and for an order for him to produce documents is presently the subject of proceedings before the High Court and it would not be proper for further comment to be made on that matter.

European Union Treaty

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the reference to

"the desire for modulation of the levels of Community participation in programmes and projects"

referred to in the protocol on economic and social cohesion to the treaty on European union; what was the original French text for this; and which body was responsible for the translation.

Mr. Sainsbury: I have been asked to reply.

The reference relates to an agreement among member states, recorded later in the protocol to allow higher rates of structural funds grant in the less prosperous member states "with a view to avoiding excessive increases in [their] budgetary expenditure". I expect precise provisions to be included in the new regulations on the funds due to take effect in 1994, but discussion of these has not yet begun.

The original French text of the reference was

"le souhait d'une modulation des niveaux de la participation communautaire aux programmes et aux projets".

The translation into English was made by the Council secretariat.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Lockerbie Bombing

Sir Teddy Taylor: To ask the Attorney-General if he will specify the nature and outcome of recent hearings in the High Court to which Her Majesty's Government have been a party initiated by representatives of the Pan Am company relating to the deposition of forensic experts and the supply of technical advice relating to the Lockerbie bombing; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: Her Majesty's Government have recently intervened in two matters brought before the English courts which have arisen from civil proceedings in the United States in connection with the Lockerbie disaster. One concerns a request for the examination of a former Crown servant involved in the investigation into the disaster; the other concerns a request for the examination of a journalist. Questions of law relating to the former request are the subject of an appeal from the High Court to the Court of Appeal, whose formal judgment is expected shortly. Questions of law relating to the latter request are still to be determined by the High Court. Both cases are therefore sub judice and it would not be appropriate for me to make further comment.

ENVIRONMENT

Ethnic Minorities

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many and what percentage of officers in grades 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 respectively, and overall in his Department are members of ethnic minorities.

Mr. Howard: Following is the information as at 1 February 1992:

Grade	Number of Ethnic Minorities	Percentage of Ethnic Minorities
1	0	0
2	0	0
3	0	0
4	0	0
5	2	1·3
6	2	0·7
7	5	0·6
Total	9	0·8
All grades	471	7·0

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when his Department last conducted a survey of the ethnic origin of its employees; when it next plans to do so; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: As part of the Department's implementation of the 1990 Office of the Minister for the Civil Service programme for action on race, a survey of staff whose ethnic origin was then unrecorded was carried out in 1991. A further survey is about to be launched.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he has taken to recruit members of ethnic minorities in top grades of employment at his Department.

Mr. Howard: When the Department needs to fill a senior post requiring a special combination of experience and qualifications it runs an open recruitment supervised by the civil service commissioners. The recruitment literature states that the civil service is an equal opportunity employer. Selection is based on suitability for the post.

Planning Applications

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what criteria he adopts when determining planning applications referred to him, or for decision by him following an appeal, that relate to the excavation of pits for the extraction of aggregates and other minerals.

Mr. Baldry: Each called-in application and planning appeal is determined on its merits, having regard to the provisions of the approved development plan and any other material considerations.

Recycling

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if his Department will require the implementation of waste collection authorities' recycling plans after 1 August; and if he will make a statement on the timetable.

Mr. Maclean: Under section 49 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990, my right hon. Friend does not have the power to require waste collection authorities to implement their recycling plans. However, the authorities are required to publicise them, which will mean that they are subject to public pressure for implementation.

Supplementary credit approvals of £12 million were distributed to local authorities for 1991-92 and £15 million have been allocated for 1992-93 to help the capital costs of establishing recycling schemes.

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assistance is available to national parks to set up recycling programmes.

Mr. Maclean: Local authorities with responsibilities for the collection of waste, including those who serve national parks, have a duty under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 to prepare recycling plans. The plans should be submitted in draft to my right hon. Friend by 1 August this year. To assist them in implementing the plans we have made available a programme of supplementary credit approvals worth £60 million over four years. Authorities are also able to claim recycling credits from waste disposal authorities in respect of household waste recycling operation in their areas; the credits are equivalent to the net savings of disposal costs and will help to finance the running costs of recycling projects.

We are investigating whether any other economic measures are necessary in order to reach our target of recycling 50 per cent. of household waste by the end of the century.

Many recycling industries are looking for ways of developing their existing operations. There is likely to be scope for them to approach the national park authorities with a view to establishing jointly collection facilities for, for example, glass and cans, in the areas most used by the public.

A recent research project was carried out for the Department on recycling in rural areas; the study area covered part of the North Yorkshire Moors national park. The report is available to any interested parties.

Coastal Protection

Mr. Clifford Forsythe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to tighten the laws preventing the exploitation of the natural assets and wildlife of the seashore by private extraction companies.

Mr. Baldry: The Secretary of State has no plans to ammend the current legislation, but will be considering whether further advice should be given in the draft planning policy and guidance notes on coastal planning.

Reptile Conservation

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what conclusions his scientific advisers have reached concerning evidence from the Indonesian authorities relating to the conservation and population status of lizards and pythons in that country; and if he will make a statement;

(2) when the next meeting of the EC Convention on Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) committee will take place; if the United Kingdom delegation will seek a reservation in respect of the trade of those lizard and python species whose import into the EC has been temporarily banned; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: The question of the temporary ban on the import into the EC of certain species from Indonesia was discussed at a meeting of EC member states at the conference of the Convention on Trade in Endangered Species parties in Kyoto in March. The Indonesian delegation to the conference had agreed that arrangements should be made urgently for the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources to work with them to assess the sustainable yield of indigenous

species in trade, and draw up quotas based on the results of this work. No such quotas have yet been produced for the United Kingdom scientific authority to consider.

The next meeting of the EC CITES committee is taking place today. Until the Community decides that the ban may be lifted, there is no question of the United Kingdom taking unilateral action to resume trade with Indonesia in the species concerned.

Small Cetaceans

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much is currently spent by his Department on research into small cetaceans in the coastal waters around the United Kingdom.

Mr. Maclean: The sum of £86,396 has been allocated in this financial year for United Kingdom cetacean research.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to promote the protection of small cetaceans at the forthcoming Earth summit.

Mr. Maclean: The Government support international and regional efforts to promote the conservation of small cetaceans. They recently signed, and will finance the interim secretariat to, the agreement for the conservation of small cetaceans of the North and Baltic seas under the Bonn convention. I expect the Earth summit to recognise the importance of such measures.

Marine Environment

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will set up a body within Government responsible for developing a co-ordinated approach to the regulation of activities in the coastal and maritime environment around the United Kingdom.

Mr. Maclean: We have noted the recent recommendation of the report of the House of Commons Select Committee on the Environment on coastal zone protection and planning that a national coastal zone unit be set up within Government to provide an overview of coastal policy. We will be responding to this recommendation, and the others made by the Committee, in due course.

Environment Council

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the issues discussed and matters decided at the Environment Council ministerial meeting in Brussels on 5 May.

Mr. Maclean: The joint Environment and Development Council ministerial meeting on 5 May considered specific elements of the Community's strategy for the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. The conclusions of this meeting record the agreements reached on the Rio declaration, the agenda 21 action programme, financial resources, technology co-operation, institutions, atmosphere, forests, desertification, biodiversity and biotechnology. Some of those issues were previously addressed in the conclusions of the Environment Council held on 12 December 1991.

Contaminated Land

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what changes there have been in the commitments set out in the Environmental Protection Act 1990 in regard to publication of the registers of information on contaminated land sites.

Mr. Maclean: Section 143 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 created a requirement for local authorities to compile and publish public registers of land which is or has been subject to contaminative use. Regulations would define the [illegible] of land to be covered and other statutory requirements for registers.

It was originally proposed that the duty for local authorities to compile registers would commence in April 1992. Regulations were to have been published early in 1992, together with other guidance on aspects of registers. Implementation of section 143 has however been delayed to enable further consideration to be given to the detail of the proposals and further consultation to be undertaken.

East London Thames Corridor

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has for strategic planning of the area he designated as the east London Thames corridor.

Mr. Baldry: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer given yesterday by my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning to my hon. Friend the Member for Basingstoke (Mr. Hunter), *Official Report*, column 610.

Hedgerows

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will take steps by planning restrictions or other measures to end the destruction of any hedgerows pending the introduction of legislation to implement the proposed hedgerow protection scheme.

Mr. Maclean: Most hedgerow loss is the consequence of poor maintenance rather than deliberate removal. In advance of wider legislation on protection, the Government plan to introduce a new hedgerow incentive scheme to promote the improved care and management of that important landscape feature.

Pollution Agency

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on his plans for a single environmental agency to control pollution in England and Wales.

Mr. Maclean: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave yesterday to the hon. Member for Cardiff, Central (Mr. Jones), *Official Report*, column *125*.

Household Waste (Recycling)

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps are being taken to meet the target of recycling 25 per cent. of all household waste by the end of the century; and if he will make a statement outlining the present percentage of household waste that is recycled and by how much this has changed since 1990.

Mr. Maclean: The Government are taking a wide range of measures to promote recycling, many of which are outlined in the first year report on the Environment White Paper "This Common Inheritance" (Cm. 1655).

In particular, the Environmental Protection Act 1990 provides a legislative framework to encourage recycling. Waste collection authorities now have a duty to prepare recycling plans. Draft plans should be submitted to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State by 1 August. To help authorities in England to implement their recycling strategies there is a programme of supplementary credit approvals worth £60 million over four years. I announced allocations for £15 million in 1992-93 on 27 April. Authorities and other recycling collectors may also claim recycling credits from waste disposal authorities for household waste recycling operations; the credits are equivalent to the net savings of disposal costs and will help to finance the running costs of recycling projects.

The Advisory Committee on Business and the Environment has recommended a number of measures to increase recycling, including raising landfill prices further and the introduction of capital allowances on recycling equipment. We are currently conducting studies on landfill pricing and the use of economic instruments to promote the recovery of waste.

The Government have identified a need for better waste statistics. We have therefore established a national household waste analysis project, the first results from which are expected later this year. We are also working with the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy to revise its statistical returns on waste collection and disposal. A new survey will start in the middle of 1992. Until the results of those initiatives are available, precise information about the proportion of household waste which is recycled will not be available. Studies indicate that overall no more than 5 per cent. of household waste is recycled. The advances since 1990 in, for example, plastics and aluminium recycling have yet to be shown in the national statistics.

Countryside

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any new proposals for protecting the countryside.

Mr. Maclean: In February the Government issued "Action for the Countryside", a comprehensive statement of our policies for the English countryside. It gave a clear statement of our policies for supporting the rural economy and protecting the countryside. It introduced a number of new initiatives and extended existing ones designed to encourage action to stimulate the rural economy, protect wildlife, protect and enhance landscapes and promote access and public enjoyment of the countryside. I am fully committed to this initiative. The initiatives will be introduced throughout this year and beyond to carry forward and further develop the policies announced in "Action for the Countryside".

Ozone-depleting Substances

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has for publishing United Kingdom production figures of ozone-depleting substances.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 13 May 1992]:* Figures for United Kingdom production of these chemicals are supplied to the Government and the EC on a confidential basis. Consumption figures are collected for the European Community but are not broken down between member states. However, a 1990 study for the Department of Trade and Industry indicated that United Kingdom consumption fell by 50 per cent. between 1986 and 1989, a rate faster than that claimed by any other developed country.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Prisoners

12. **Mr. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners there are currently in police cells in Greater Manchester.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Today, 260 prisoners are being held in police cells in Greater Manchester.

28. **Mr. Knox:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people were in prison at the most recent count.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: On Wednesday 13 May 1992, the prison population stood at 45,805. In addition, 1,598 prisoners, who should have been accommodated in prison service establishments, were held in police cells.

Drug Trafficking

13. **Mr. John Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on recent progress on his policy to combat drug trafficking.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Police and customs continue to undertake very successful operations against drug trafficking, with growing quantities of drugs seized and drugs traffickers brought to justice. We plan to bring forward a Bill, later this year, to strengthen the powers of the courts to confiscate the assets of drug traffickers. I propose to give high priority to strengthening still further our efforts in this field.

Travellers

14. **Mr. Dunn:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will indicate the recent actions taken by his Department concerning changes to the law regarding the illegal occupation of private and public land by traveller families; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: After a thorough public review of section 39 of the Public Order Act 1986 which deals with aggravated trespass on land, my right hon. Friend the then Home Secretary concluded in May 1991 that no change to the law on public order was appropriate.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment is currently undertaking a thorough review of the Caravan Sites Act 1968.

War Crimes

15. **Mr. Winnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to bring forward proposals to amend the War Crimes Act 1991.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: No.

Victim Support

16. **Mr. Amess:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the work of Victim Support.

Mr. Jack: The Government attach high importance to the work of those who provide emotional support, practical help and advice to victims of crime. There are currently about 385 local branches and schemes, with some 7,500 volunteer visitors, covering about 97 per cent. of the population of England and Wales. They handle over 600,000 cases a year. Home Office support for this activity, by way of grant to the national voluntary organisation, Victim Support, has risen by 85 per cent. over the past three years to £7·3 million in the current year.

Convictions

17. **Mr. Peter Bottomley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proportion of males aged 15, 20 and 30 years have been convicted of at least one indictable offence.

Mr. Jack: Based on information from the offenders' index, a study of a cohort of males born in 1953 has shown that 11 per cent. aged 15, 23 per cent. aged 20, and 33 per cent. aged 30 had received at least one conviction for "standard list" offences, which include all indictable offences.

Traffic Pollution

18. **Mr. Adley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what consultations he intends to have with the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis on the problems of pollution and congestion caused by traffic.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The problem of pollution caused by traffic is not primarily one for the Commissioner or for my Department, although the police are aware that technological developments may be able to help them to detect unlawful exhaust emissions.

Metropolitan Police

19. **Ms. Abbott:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he next plans to visit the Metropolitan police to discuss its establishment.

Mr. Charles Wardle: My right hon. Friend had an introductory discussion with the Commissioner of Police for the Metropolis on 14 April and met him again at the launch of EUROW, in aid of Save the Children, on Tuesday 5 May. He also plans to visit the command and control suite at New Scotland Yard.

Police (Civilianisation)

21. **Mr. Gill:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will estimate the number of police officers returned to operational duties by the policy of civilianisation since 1979.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Since records were first started in 1983, some 5,700 police officers have been freed for operational duties by civilianising posts which do not require the powers or skills of a police officer. This represents an efficiency saving of some £110 million a year at 1991-92 prices.

Rape Within Marriage

22. **Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will include in legislation a measure to make rape within marriage illegal.

Mr. Jack: The House of Lords confirmed in October 1991, in the case of R *v.* R, that a husband can be convicted under the Sexual Offences Act 1956 for the rape of his wife. In January 1992, the Law Commission published a report proposing that this position should be consolidated and amplifed in new legislation. Its recommendations are being carefully considered.

Illegal Immigrants

23. **Mr. David Shaw:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the numbers of illegal immigrants attempting entry through Dover port during the last 15 years.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Comprehensive figures covering the last 15 years are not available. So far this year up to 7 May, 44 clandestine illegal entrants have been detected at the port of Dover, compared with 20 detected during the whole of 1991.

Operation Bumblebee

24. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what preliminary report he has received on Operation Bumblebee.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Operation Bumblebee was set up on 1 June 1991 in the No. 1 area of the Metropolitan police service. During the period 1 June 1991 to 10 April 1992, 2,397 people, including 445 juveniles in the area were charged with burglary or related offences. Since the start of this operation, the increase in the burglary rate in the No. 1 area has slowed dramatically to 2 per cent.

Operation Bumblebee was extended to the No. 5 area of the Metropolitan police on 6 January 1992.

Police Specials

25. **Sir Fergus Montgomery:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many specials his Department recruited in the first quarter of the current year.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Special constables are recruited locally by police forces. Recruitment figures are collected annually and are not available for the period requested. I understand that nearly 1,000 applications to join the special constabulary were received in the first three months of this year. There was an overall rise in numbers of special constables during 1991 of nearly 2,200, to a total of just over 18,000.

Voluntary Sector

26. **Mr. Steen:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to encourage the extension and greater co-ordination of the voluntary sector.

Mr. Jack: The voluntary services unit in my Department will be continuing its task in 1992 of supporting those bodies whose role it is to both encourage and extend the work of the voluntary sector.

Custodial Sentences

27. **Mr. Burden:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action he proposes to ensure sufficient places are available to those given custodial sentences by the courts.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The existing prison building programme is intended to provide sufficient places for those sent to prison. It was begun in the early 1980s and will have delivered in excess of 11,000 new prison places when it reaches completion in 1994. Fifteen new prisons have opened so far. Three more will be opening later this year.

School-age Crime

29. **Mr. Ron Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proposals he has to reduce the level of crime committed by young people of school age.

Mr. Jack: We pursue a wide range of policies against crime. Most are relevant to offenders of school age, including action to reduce the opportunities for crime. Local initiatives aim to prevent offending, and include police schemes for activities for school children during the holidays, projects funded through the safer cities programme, and approximately 350 youth crime prevention panels. The Government are examining the effectiveness of local schemes, in order to pull together experience from all over the country and help local people to translate it into good practice.

Polish Nationals

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he intends to announce the review of visa requirements for Polish citizens wishing to visit the United Kingdom.

Mr. Charles Wardle: My right hon. and learned Friend will review the need for the visa requirement later this year by which time the impact on other member states of the Community of abolishing the visa requirement may have become more apparent.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will end the requirement for Polish nationals to have visas to enter the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I shall review the need for the visa requirement later this year by which time the impact on other member states of the Community of abolishing the visa requirement may have become more apparent.

Young Offenders

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many juveniles were remanded in custody in the last year for which figures are available;

(2) how many people under 21 years of age were remanded in custody in the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information requested is given in the table:

Persons[1] aged under 21 received into prison service establishments in England and Wales as unsentenced prisoners in 1991: by age on reception and type of reception.

Type of reception	*Numbers of persons Age on reception Under 17*	*17 and under 21*	*Total under 21*
Untried	1,073	16,841	17,914
Convicted unsentenced[2]	124	3,839	3,963

[1] Provisional figures
[2] Including persons initially received as untried prisoners

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many juveniles received a custodial sentence after being remanded in custody in the last year for which figures are available;

(2) how many young people under 21 years of age received a custodial sentence after being remanded in custody in the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The readily available information relates only to those aged under 17 or 17 and under 21 years on initial remand into a prison service establishment in England and Wales. Provisional figures for 1990 were published in table 2.6 of "Prison Statistics England and Wales 1990" (Cm 1800), a copy of which is in the Library. Final data for 1990 and provisional data for 1991 are not yet available.

Police Complaints Authority

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether the police force operating at the privatised port of Tilbury will be subject to the Police Complaints Authority.

Mr. Charles Wardle: This will be a matter, in the first instance, for agreement between the Police Complaints Authority and the authority maintaining the police force concerned.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what criteria have been applied in deciding which non-Home Office forces shall be included within the jurisdiction of the Police Complaints Authority; and how those criteria have been applied in the case of *(a)* Dover Harbour police and *(b)* the Royal Parks Constabulary.

Mr. Charles Wardle: It would be, in the first instance, for the Police Complaints Authority and the authority maintaining the police forces concerned to reach agreement, with the approval of the Home Secretary, for the establishment of procedures corresponding to those set out in part IX of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984. Such an agreement has been approved in the case of the Royal Parks Constabulary. Whether it would be appropriate for the PCA to make an agreement with the smaller Dover harbour police is a matter which is still being explored.

Police Officers (Ethnic Minorities)

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give the number of *(a)* men and *(b)* women from ethnic minorities in the United Kingdom serving as police officers in each police force in England and Wales.

Mr. Charles Wardle: At the end of February 1992 there were 1,631 officers from ethnic minorities. The information requested for each force in England and Wales is set out in the table:

Ethnic Minorities

Force	*Men*	*Women*
As at 28 February 1992		
Avon and Somerset	18	6
Bedfordshire	27	11
Cambridgeshire	18	8
Cheshire	1	1
Cleveland	10	2
Cumbria	2	—
Derbyshire	20	4
Devon and Cornwall	2	—
Dorset	3	—
Durham	3	1
Dyfed Powys	—	—
Essex	20	2
Gloucestershire	10	2
Greater Manchester	104	21
Gwent	7	—
Hampshire	13	2
Hertfordshire	13	5
Humberside	5	1
Kent	9	2
Lancashire	25	5
Leicestershire	49	5
Lincolnshire	1	2
Merseyside	48	9
Norfolk	—	—
Northamptonshire	17	2
Northumbria	12	2
North Wales	1	—
North Yorkshire	4	—
Nottinghamshire	41	11
South Wales	20	1
South Yorkshire	24	4
Staffordshire	14	5
Suffolk	4	2
Surrey	12	1
Sussex	12	3
Thames Valley	43	10
Warwickshire	7	2
West Mercia	14	4
West Midlands	144	47
West Yorkshire	72	17
Wiltshire	11	2
City of London	6	2
Metropolitan	431	130
Total	1,297	334

Lollipop People

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to expand the number and improve the pay of lollipop people in Greater London; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that at 30 April the number of school crossing patrol people which had risen by 22 since 11 February stood at 1,164, against an establishment of 1,350. School crossing patrol pay is based on rates agreed by the National Joint Council for Local Authorities Services and is reviewed annually.

Immigration Cases (Members' Interventions)

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received on the arrangements currently in force concerning the intervention of Members of the House of Commons in immigration cases.

Mr. Charles Wardle: None.

Treaty on European Union

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what new legislative, regulatory or administrative actions, or similar steps based on existing statutory authority, he expects to be necessary in order to implement the agreed objectives of the proposed European union, consequent on title VI, articles K and K1-9 of the draft treaty agreed at Maastricht, relating to home and judicial affairs.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Title VI of the Maastricht treaty establishes a framework for future co-operation between the member states of the EC in the areas listed in article KI. Where conventions are drawn up to give effect to action between the member states, they will need to be ratified individually by Parliament in the usual way.

South Africa (Electors)

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people resident in the Republic of South Africa were registered as electors for the United Kingdom Parliament for the recent general election; how many actually voted; and how their votes were distributed between the 651 constituencies.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Information is not held centrally on the number of overseas electors living in particular countries abroad, or on the number of proxies who voted on behalf of overseas electors in the recent general election.

Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proposals he has to increase the current strength of his inspectorate with responsibility for enforcing the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: There are currently 21 members of the Home Office animals (scientific procedures) inspectorate which is now at full strength. There are no plans to increase the size of the inspectorate as I am satisfied that its present strength is adequate.

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it his policy to extend greater animal welfare and independent representation within the membership of the animal procedures committee; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: In making appointments to the animal procedures committee, I am required by section 19 of the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 to have regard to the desirability of ensuring that the interests of animal welfare are adequately represented. The current composition of the committee is in line with that requirement, and I know from its good work that the committee as a whole has proper regard for animal welfare in carrying out its deliberations and in advising me.

Forensic Science Agency

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what targets he has set for the Forensic Science Agency for 1992-93.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The 1992-93 targets expect that the FSS will improve its effectiveness and efficiency maintaining its high standard of scientific work. The financial targets are recovery of full costs, a unit cost of £482, with a unit cost productivity gain of 4·3 per cent. The service level targets include improved turnround times to secure an average reduction of the 11 per cent. in casework delivery dates compared with those achieved last year.

Passport Agency

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what performance targets he has set for the United Kingdom Passport Agency in 1992-93.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: During 1992-93 I shall expect the Passport Agency to continue to seek improvements in the standard of service it provides to customers, and in achieving value for money.

I have set the agency the following key targets:

(i) to process properly completed, straightforward applications within a maximum of 20 working days in the periods of peak demand between January and June, 15 working days in July and August, and 10 working days at other times,

(ii) to process such applications within an overall average of 9 working days for the year as a whole,

(iii) to reduce unit costs by a further 1·6 per cent. in real terms over the previous year's target.

The chief executive will remain directly accountable to me for the performance of the Passport Agency. An advisory board, including two private sector members with experience of delivering services to the public, will continue to help me in assessing the agency's performance.

Football

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent representations he has received about the implementation of the Taylor report.

Mr. Mellor: I have been asked to reply.

Responsibility for sports ground safety, including the implementation of all-seating, is to be transferred from the Home Department to the Department of National Heritage.

Since the beginning of 1992, the Home Secretary has received 47 letters from hon. Members and 68 letters from members of the public. The Secretary of State for National Heritage has received 12 letters from hon. Members and 18 letters from members of the public. In addition, the Football Supporters Association wrote on 1 February to the Home Secretary and on 24 April to the Secretary of State for National Heritage enclosing a copy of its document "The Preservation of Standing Accommodation at Football Grounds".

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 15 May 1992

LORD CHANCELLOR

Court Interpreters

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary to the Lord Chancellor's Department what cost implications the steering group of the major agencies of the legal system has identified in respect of the establishment of courses and training for court interpreters; and what the cost would be of implementing a system of qualifications.

Mr. John M. Taylor: A steering group of the main agencies of the legal system has been convened by the Nuffield Foundation to promote the use of trained interpreters by the police, the courts and other legal services. The steering group has met four times since January 1991. It will start to address questions of cost at its next meeting on 21 May and will primarily be concerned with the cost to the legal system of using qualified interpreters and the setting up of training courses.

Legal Aid

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary to the Lord Chancellor's Department what was the legal aid *(a)* budget and *(b)* outturn in each year from 1979 to 1991; what was the percentage increase in each year after allowing for inflation; and what number of people received legal aid in each year.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The information required is detailed in the table:

Financial Year	*Provision + Supplementary £million*[1]	*Outturn £million*	*Percentage increase legal aid*	*Percentage increase GDP*	*Increase above GDP percentage increase*	*Number of bills paid*[2]
1979-80	101·31 + —	99·35	—	—	—	971,684
1980-81	127·81 + 5·53	138·89	39·8	14·00	25·8	1,088,945
1981-82	190·43 + —	170·26	22·6	9·71	12·8	1,269,685
1982-83	222·96 + 20.00	215·45	26·5	9·50	17·0	1,400,772
1983-84	244·00 + —	237·22	10·1	8·40	1·7	1,538,113
1984-85	276·40 + —	273·99	15·5	7·10	8·4	1,705,598
1985-86	301·02 + 25·9	319·46	16·6	9·50	7·1	1,964,267
1986-87	357·19 + 23.00	362·94	13·6	7·60	6·0	2,225,599
1987-88	442·31 + —	433·65	19·5	10·70	8·8	2,504,194
1988-89	488·48 + —	478·49	10·3	11·20	−0·9	2,460,384
1989-90	546·02 + 12·46	568·83	18·9	8·40	10·4	2,665,113
1990-91	608·27 + 90·96	683·81	20·2	6·40	13·8	2,725,902

[1] Exclusive of administration costs.

[2] The Legal Aid Board does not record its information in the form of the number of people who have received legal aid in any given year. More than one individual can be assisted by a single certificate and it is also possible for an individual to have received separate acts of assistance from the Legal Aid Board on separate issues in a given year. What is recorded is the number of acts of assistance. The number of bills paid correlates to the number of acts of assistance.

PRIME MINISTER

Department of Health

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Prime Minister if he will consider renaming the Department of Health in order more clearly to identify its responsibility for the personal social services.

The Prime Minister: No.

Dalai Lama

Mr. Riddick: To ask the Prime Minister if he will invite the Dalai Lama to visit the United Kingdom.

The Prime Minister: I have no plans to do so but the Dalai Lama is welcome to visit the United Kingdom at any time. I met him during his last visit in December last year.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Electoral Registration

Dr. John Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will place in the Library the public opinion survey carried out by his Department, entitled "Post Campaign Research for Electoral Registration Advertising".

Mr. Peter Lloyd: A copy of a report into the effectiveness of the 1991 advertising campaign on electoral registration entitled "Home Office Electoral Registration Campaign: Campaign Monitor Summary Report" was placed in the Library in January this year.

Dogs

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he was first requested to confirm the byelaw approved by South Hams district council, based on the Home Office model, excluding all dogs from certain beaches along the coastline of south Devon during the summer months; and if he will make it his policy to approve it immediately.

Mr. Charles Wardle: On 19 July 1991, South Hams district council applied to the Home Office for confirmation of byelaws to regulate dogs on various beaches. A number of objections to the byelaws had been sent to the Home Office and the council was asked to comment on these in August and December 1991.

After considering the objections, and the council's observations, my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary confirmed the byelaws on 11 May 1992 and the consent of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport, which is also required for seashore byelaws, was granted on 12 May.

The byelaws, which were returned to the council by the Department of Transport on 12 May, will come into force on 19 May 1992.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Hotels

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish details of the rateable valuation of each hotel in each parliamentary constituency in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Mates: The information is not available in the format requested. I have, however, written to the hon. Gentleman and placed a copy of my response in the Library.

Ethnic Minorities

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many and what percentage of officers in grades 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 respectively and overall in his Department are members of ethnic minorities.

Mr. Mates: At 31 March 1992, the Northern Ireland Office had 103 London-based staff, all of whom had been invited to take part in an ethnic monitoring survey. Of those who responded, 14 per cent. described themselves as belonging to an ethnic minority. None of these were in grades 1 to 7. The Northern Ireland civil service is not required to monitor the ethnic origin of its staff and the information is not therefore available.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when the Northern Ireland Departments last conducted a survey of the ethnic origin of their employees; when they next plan to do so; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Mates: In June 1988, the home civil service completed a four-year programme of ethnic origin surveys covering all staff then in post. The Northern Ireland Office has continued to monitor staff who join the home civil service group in the Department and to update its records. The Northern Ireland Office is an equal opportunity employer and this is emphasised in all recruiting campaigns and advertising. The Northern Ireland civil service is not required to monitor the ethnic origin of staff, nor has it current plans to do so.

Coastal Protection

Mr. Clifford Forsythe: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he has any plans to tighten the laws preventing the exploitation of the natural assets and wildlife of the seashore by private extraction companies.

Mr. Atkins: There are no plans at present to amend the current legislation.

Handicapped Children

Mr. Maginnis: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) how many specialist teachers of visually impaired children, who are not attending special schools, are employed on a part-time basis in each of the education and library board areas; and what is their full-time equivalence;

(2) how many specialist teachers of hearing impaired children, who are not attending special schools, are employed on a part-time basis in each of the education and library board areas; and what is their full-time equivalence;

(3) how many specialist teachers of visually impaired children, who are not attending special schools, are employed on a full-time basis in each of the education and library board areas;

(4) how many specialist teachers of hearing impaired children, who are not attending special schools, are employed on a full-time basis in each of the education and library board areas;

(5) how many specialist teachers of *(a)* visually impaired and *(b)* hearing impaired children, who are not attending special schools, are employed directly by the Department of Education for Northern Ireland.

Mr. Hanley: No specialist teachers of visually impaired children are employed on a full-time or part-time basis in any of the education and library board areas. A support service for all such children is provided by Jordanstown special school.

A number of full-time and part-time specialist teachers of hearing impaired children are employed in special units attached to mainstream schools as follows:

Board	*Full-time*	*Part-time*	*Full-time equivalency*
Belfast	7	2	0·8
Western	6	1	0·6
North Eastern	5	—	—
South Eastern	7	2	1·0
Southern	5	—	—

In addition, the education and library boards operate a peripatetic teaching service and four teachers in each board currently offer support to pupils with hearing problems and their teachers in special mainstream schools.

The Department of Education itself does not employ any teachers.

Mr. Maginnis: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how often, on average *(a)* a visually impaired and *(b)* a hearing impaired child, who is not attending a special school, will be visited by a specialist teacher each year; and what is the average duration of each visit.

Mr. Hanley: This information is not held centrally.

Mr. Maginnis: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many children, not attending a special school, are registered as *(a)* visually impaired and *(b)* hearing impaired in each of the education and library board areas.

Mr. Hanley: The latest available information relates to the 1990-91 school year, and is as follows:

Area board	Visually impaired	Hearing impaired
Belfast	4	69
Western	29	63
North Eastern	17	36
South Eastern	13	64
Southern	18	50
TOTAL	81	282

HEALTH

NHS Trusts

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the position of hospital trusts in the national health service.

Dr. Mawhinney: NHS trust status is the management model of choice for the provision of health care within the national health service. The first 57 NHS trusts have shown that they are better able to respond to patients needs through the great freedoms and flexibility that NHS trust status affords. Ninety-nine hospitals and other units became operational as NHS trusts from 1 April 1992 and we look to them and to those coming forward in subsequent waves to continue the tradition.

Becton and Dickinson Pens

Mr. Hutton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what assessments she has made of the cost of providing needles for BD pens on prescriptions;

(2) whether needles for BD pens will be available on prescription; and if she will make a statement;

(3) what representations she has received on the question of providing needles for BD pens on prescription; what was the content of those representations; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: We have received a small number of representations on this issue. Decisions about additions to the list of items which GPs may prescribe must be subject to the availability of resources and other competing priorities. In the case of insulin injection pens, and their special needles, negotiations about the price are continuing with manufacturers. From the information currently available, the cost of these pens and their needles would exceed the current cost of disposable needles.

Respite Care

Mr. Butcher: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will conduct a study of the general health of those carers whose dependants are in receipt of respite care.

Mr. Yeo: In 1985, the general household survey included a series of questions for people looking after a sick, handicapped or elderly person, so as to provide as full a picture as possible of informal carers. Information was collected about the health of carers and about time off from caring. In 1990, questions about informal carers were again included in the general household survey, and the results will be published in due course.

In addition, the Department is currently funding a three-year study at the National Institute for Social Work to investigate the effectiveness of respite services for the carers of confused elderly people. One component of the study, which is due to report later this year, is the impact of respite services on the health of carers.

Tobacco Advertising

Mr. Sims: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she expects to publish the report of the Department's chief economic adviser on the impact of banning tobacco advertising on consumption and prevalence; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: The contents of the Department's study on the effects of tobacco advertising will be made available in an appropriate form when it has been completed.

Intensive Coronary Care Beds

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to the answer of 12 May, *Official Report*, column 483, how many male intensive coronary care beds there are in Calderdale health authority; and what is the comparable provision in other health authorities.

Dr. Mawhinney: In the year ending March 1991 there were four beds designated specifically for intensive care services in Calderdale health authority. Those beds are available for the urgent treatment of male and female patients. Provisional figures of available beds in intensive care wards in Calderdale and other authorities are given in the table.

Number of available beds in intensive care wards by district 1990-91. (Provisional)

		Number
	ENGLAND	2,484
	Northern RHA	202
A01	Hartlepool	7
A02	North Tees	13
A03	South Tees	21
A04	East Cumbria	10
A05	South Cumbria	5
A06	West Cumbria	4
A07	Darlington	9
A08	Durham	8
A09	North West Durham	8
A10	South West Durham	8
A11	Northumberland	6
A12	Gateshead	2
A13	Newcastle	79
A14	North Tyneside	4
A15	South Tyneside	6
A16	Sunderland	11
	Yorkshire RHA	151
B12	Hull	8
B13	East Yorkshire	7
B14	Grimsby	10
B15	Scunthorpe	0
B22	Northallerton	4
B23	York	14
B24	Scarborough	8
B25	Harrogate	6
B32	Bradford	5
B33	Airedale	10
B42	Calderdale	4
B52	Huddersfield	15
B53	Dewsbury	8
B62	Leeds Western	16
B63	Leeds Eastern	19
B72	Wakefield	7
B73	Pontefract	10

		Number
	Trent RHA	262
C01	North Derbyshire	2
C02	South Derbyshire	21
C03	Leicestershire	42
C04	North Lincolnshire	6
C05	South Lincolnshire	11
C06	Bassetlaw	9
C07	Central Nottinghamshire	6
C08	Nottingham	70
C09	Barnsley	13
C10	Doncaster	24
C11	Rotherham	11
C12	Sheffield	47
	East Anglia RHA	101
D01	Cambridge	15
D02	Peterborough	15
D03	West Suffolk	14
D04	East Suffolk	5
D06	Norwich	16
D07	Great Yarmouth and Waveney	8
D08	West Norfolk and Wisbech	13
D09	Huntingdon	16
	North West Thames RHA	138
E01	North Bedfordshire	5
E02	South Bedfordshire	5
E03	North Hertfordshire	3
E04	East Hertfordshire	9
E05	North West Hertfordshire	11
E06	South West Hertfordshire	5
E07	Barnet	20
E08	Harrow	12
E09	Hillingdon	17
E10	Hounslow and Spelthorne	7
E11	Ealing	6
E14	Riverside	27
E17	Parkside	10
	North East Thames RHA	254
F01	Basildon and Thurrock	7
F02	Mid Essex	13
F03	North East Essex	6
F04	West Essex	2
F05	Southend	66
F06	Barking, Havering and Brentwood	5
F07	Hampstead	18
F08	Bloomsbury	66
F09	Islington	4
F10	City and Hackney	16
F11	Newham	12
F12	Tower Hamlets	17
F13	Enfield	4
F14	Haringey	10
F15	Redbridge	2
F16	Waltham Forest	7
	South East Thames RHA	159
GO1	Brighton	12
GO2	Eastbourne	2
GO3	Hastings	4
GO4	South East Kent	8
GO5	Canterbury and Thanet	15
GO6	Dartford and Gravesham	3
GO7	Maidstone	4
GO8	Medway	6
GO9	Tunbridge Wells	10
G10	Bexley	5
G11	Greenwich	24
G12	Bromley	20
G13	West Lambeth	12
G14	Camberwell	18
G15	Lewisham and North Southwark	15
	South West Thames RHA	155
HO1	North West Surrey	23
HO2	W. Surrey and North East Hants	7
HO3	South West Surrey	6
HO4	Mid Surrey	14
HO5	East Surrey	7
HO6	Chichester	5
HO7	Mid Downs	17
HO8	Worthing	20
HO9	Croydon	10
H10	Kingston and Esher	6
H11	Richmond, Twickenham and Roehampton	8
H12	Wandsworth	29
H13	Merton and Sutton	6
	Wessex RHA	174
J11	East Dorset	22
J12	West Dorset	4
J21	Portsmouth and South East Hants	22
J22	South West Hampshire and Southampton	71
J23	Winchester	4
J24	Basingstoke	12
J31	Salisbury	8
J32	Swindon	12
J33	Bath	11
J41	Isle of Wight	8
	Oxford RHA	91
K11	East Berkshire	3
K12	West Berkshire	21
K21	Aylesbury Vale	4
K22	Wycombe	4
K23	Milton Keynes	4
K31	Kettering	7
K32	Northampton	13
K41	Oxfordshire	35
	South Western RHA	138
L11	Bristol and Weston	19
L12	Frenchay	8
L13	Southmead	9
L21	Cornwall and Isles of Scilly	18
L31	Exeter	21
L32	North Devon	6
L33	Plymouth	16
L34	Torbay	10
L41	Cheltenham	3
L42	Gloucester	9
L51	Somerset	19
	West Midlands RHA	259
M01	Bromsgrove and Redditch	7
M02	Herefordshire	6
M03	Kidderminster and district	6
M04	Worcester and district	12
M05	Shropshire	21
M06	Mid Staffordshire	10
M07	North Staffordshire	16
M08	South East Staffordshire	12
M09	Rugby	0
M10	North Warwickshire	9
M11	South Warwickshire	6
M12	Central Birmingham	8
M13	East Birmingham	7
M14	North Birmingham	18
M15	South Birmingham	10
M16	West Birmingham	11
M17	Coventry	22
M18	Dudley	22
M19	Sandwell	31
M20	Solihull	1
M21	Walsall	8
M22	Wolverhampton	16
	Mersey RHA	118
N11	Chester	14
N12	Crewe	5
N13	Halton	4
N14	Macclesfield	3
N15	Warrington	4
N21	Liverpool	51
N31	St. Helen's and Knowsley	8

		Number
N41	Southport and Formby	7
N42	South Sefton	20
N51	Wirral	2
	North Western RHA	234
P01	Lancaster	10
P02	Blackpool, Wyre and Fylde	15
P03	Preston	18
P04	Blackburn, Hyndburn and Ribble	7
P05	Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale	11
P06	West Lancashire	3
P07	Chorley and South Ribble	0
P08	Bolton	11
P09	Bury	8
P10	North Manchester	14
P11	Central Manchester	19
P12	South Manchester	32
P13	Oldham	10
P14	Rochdale	11
P15	Salford	28
P16	Stockport	10
P17	Tameside and Glossop	5
P18	Trafford	8
P19	Wigan	12
	Special Health Authorities	48
T01	The Hospital for Sick Children	0
T02	National Hospital Nervous Diseases	2
T03	Moorfields Eye Hospital	0
T04	Bethlem Royal Hospital	0
T05	National Heart and Lung Hospitals SHA	37
T06	The Royal Marsden Hospital	0
T07	Hammersmith, Queen Charlotte	9
T09	The Eastman Dental Hospital	0

Source: DH Form KH3O, SD(Fylde) 14/05/92.

Care Homes

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is her latest estimate of the average weekly cost of a residential care place in local authority care homes.

Mr. Yeo: The latest available figures are those published by the Chartered Institute for Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA). Its estimates for 1991-92 suggest an average gross cost per place filled, excluding capital charges, for local authority residential care provision for elderly people of £190 a week.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proposals she has to abolish the division between residential and nursing homes.

Mr. Yeo: None. Generally speaking, residential care homes and nursing homes cater for people with different needs. This is reflected in the different services and facilities which they offer.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is her latest estimate of the number of residential places for the elderly in local authority care homes.

Mr. Yeo: At 31 March 1991, the latest date for which information is available centrally, there were 96,100 places in local authority residential care homes in England whose primary function was stated to be caring for the elderly.

South Essex Health Consortium

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she has approved the setting up of the South Essex Health Consortium; what is its function; and what statutory base it has.

Dr. Mawhinney: The South Essex Health Consortium is a non-statutory body formed to co-ordinate the purchasing of health care services on behalf of Southend, Basildon and Thurrock, Brentwood and part of Barking, Havering and Brentwood district health authorities and the southern part of Essex family health services authority. It did not require the approval of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to be established.

Residential Care

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she expects to receive the conclusions of the Howe inquiry into residential care; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: The report of Lady Howe's inquiry will be made to the local government interests which commissioned it. We will be glad to consider any recommendations relevant to our responsibilities once the report is published, which I believe may be early in June.

Personal Social Services

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment she has made of the adequacy of funding of local authority personal social services in the current financial year in terms of the ability of individual social services departments to undertake their statutory responsibilities.

Mr. Yeo: Personal social services (PSS) standard spending for 1992-93 has been set at £4,850 million, an increase of 7·7 per cent. (3·1 per cent. in real terms) over 1991-92 standard spending, and 6 per cent. higher than 1991-92 budgets. The settlement provides a realistic increase in resources for PSS taking account of falling inflation, and allows for the first full-year costs of implementing the Children Act 1989, phase 2 of community care, new and increased specific grants, inflation and demography. PSS expenditure has increased by nearly 60 per cent. in real terms since 1978-79.

WALES

Communications (Eire)

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will be meeting the Irish Transport Minister to discuss improving road and rail communications between Eire and the rest of Europe, particularly between St. Cleers and Pembroke Dock and Fishguard ferry ports.

Sir Wyn Roberts: My right hon. Friend has no plans to do so.

Seashore (Preservation)

Mr. Clifford Forsythe: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he has any plans to tighten the laws preventing the exploitation of the natural assets and wildlife of the seashore by private extraction companies.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: There are no plans at present to amend current legislation.

Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he has any plans to designate any further areas of outstanding natural beauty in Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The responsibility for designating areas of outstanding natural beauty rests with the Countryside Council for Wales, although such designations require confirmation by my right hon. Friend before they take effect. There are no proposals currently before my right hon. Friend.

Welsh Development Agency

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had with the chairman of the Welsh Development Agency concerning the level of senior management staff turnover at the agency; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: None.

Information Technology

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had with the chairman of the Welsh Development Agency concerning *(a)* the resignation of Mr. Tony Meredith, the head of the information technology initiative and *(b)* the future structure and funding of the information technology initiative.

Mr. David Hunt: None.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment he has made in conjunction with the chairman of the Welsh Development Agency of the number of information technology-based inward investment projects in the pipeline for Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: I regularly discuss a range of matters with the chairman of the agency, including the many prospective inward investment projects.

Polychlorinated Biphenyls (Pontypool)

Mr. Roger Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what progress is being made with Panteg environmental monitoring study being undertaken by the university of East Anglia into levels of polychlorinated biphenyl contamination in the Pontypool area.

Mr. David Hunt: The study which I commissioned in January 1991 continues to make good progress. I published the first interim report last October, and I have now placed copies of the second and latest interim report in the Library of the House. The second report describes the detailed sampling and analysis programme which is now well underway. I expect the study to be completed early in 1993.

EMPLOYMENT

Unemployment Benefit Office, Rawtenstall

Ms. Janet Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many claimants were suspended from unemployment benefit at the Rawtenstall unemployment benefit office in each year since 1987; and what percentage of claimants this represented each year.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Questions on operational matters in the Employment Service executive agency are the responsibility of the agency's chief executive, to whom I have referred this question for reply.

Construction Industry

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many unemployed people in Wales were last employed in the construction industry in Wales.

Mr. McLoughlin: It is estimated from the labour force survey that in the spring of 1991 there were 23,000 unemployed people—on the internationally agreed International Labour Organisation definition—in Wales whose previous employment, within the past three years, was reported to have been in the construction industry.

Unemployment Statistics

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will list the number of jobs lost in the *(a)* textile industry, *(b)* transport and communication, *(c)* construction, *(d)* energy and water supplies, *(e)* other minerals and ore extraction, *(f)* metal goods, engineering and vehicles, *(g)* other manufacturing and *(h)* banking, finance, insurance etc. since January 1989, by month, (i) in Leeds, West and (ii) in England, giving the most recent figures available.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The latest available estimates of changes in employment by constituency are for the period September 1987 to September 1989 when censuses of employment were taken. Employment estimates for standard regions are not available monthly and are available only at division level of the standard industrial classification 1980 (SIC 80). The available information is as follows:

Employees in employment in England[a]
Net change since previous quarter—(unadjusted)

Thousands

	Energy and water supply *Division 1*	*Metal manufacturing and chemicals* *Division 2*	*Metal goods, engineering and vehicles* *Division 3*	*Other manufacturing* *Division 4*
1989				
March	−7	−7	−10	−32
June	−8	24	−20	1
September	−8	27	10	22
December	0	−1	−8	−11
1990				
March	−4	−11	−22	−32
June	−1	−4	−15	4
September	−1	−1	11	5
December	−1	−16	−45	−30

	Energy and water supply Division 1	Metal manufacturing and chemicals Division 2	Metal goods, engineering and vehicles Division 3	Other manufacturing Division 4
1991				
March	−3	−25	−65	−55
June	−4	−9	−49	−24
September	−4	0	−14	1
December	−10	−7	−16	−24

	Construction Division 5	Transport and communication Division 7	Banking insurance and finance Division 8
1989			
March	10	3	38
June	15	21	20
September	3	12	49
December	−6	4	11
1990			
March	−6	0	20
June	−5	0	16
September	−7	9	−1
December	−21	−11	−38
1991			
March	−35	−20	−20
June	−24	−8	−25
September	−24	−5	−6
December	−26	0	−46

[1] England comprises the standard regions of Great Britain excluding Wales and Scotland.

Training and Enterprise Councils

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many training and enterprise councils give *(a)* £30 per week, *(b)* less than £30 per week and *(c)* over £30 per week under the enterprise allowance scheme.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: It is not possible to provide information in the form required, except at disproportionate cost.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Aid

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what specific financial assistance is currently being granted by the Government to developing countries to help reduce pollution and environmental damage; and, of this amount, how much is ear-marked for *(a)* clean water and sanitation projects, *(b)* pollution reduction technologies and *(c)* improved protection for forests and natural habitats.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We examine environmental issues in all projects financed under the aid programme. Separate figures are not maintained for assistance given to reduce pollution and environmental damage. The most recent information available shows that in 1989 £36·8 million was provided in bilateral assistance for water and sanitation projects. In the forestry sector, there are currently 202 projects either under way or in preparation at the total cost to the aid programme of £158 million. My right hon. and noble Friend the Minister for Overseas Development will be writing separately to the hon. Member on the subject of pollution reduction technologies.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy to introduce new funding mechanisms to assist developing countries in dealing with the effects of climate changes.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: No. The internatinal negotiating committee for a framework convention on climate change completed its final session on 9 May 1992 in New York. It has been agreed that the global environment facility, under the auspices of the World bank, United Nations Development Programme and United Nations Environment Programme, will provide assistance to help developing countries fulfil their convention commitments. The United Kingom has pledged £40·3 million to the GEF and we have indicated our willingness to commit new and additional financial resources to replenish the facility at an appropriate moment if other countries do the same.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what changes Her Majesty's Government propose to make in resources allocated to overseas aid over the next four years; and what percentage of gross national product this will represent.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Public expenditure provision for overseas aid to developing countries is £1,831 million in 1992-93, £1,899 million in 1993-94 and £1,975 million in 1994-95. The provision for 1995-96 will be considered during the public expenditure survey later this year. The percentage of gross national product that these provisions will represent is dependent upon developments in the United Kingdom economy.

Debt

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what will be the estimated reduction in debt service payments in 1992 on official bilateral debt, from those countries which have received Trinidad terms compared with actual payments made on official bilateral debt by those countries in 1991.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The Prime Minister's 1990 Trinidad terms initiative has so far benefited five of the poorest, most heavily indebted countries. The terms reduce the amount of debt service due over the length of the debtor's current International Monetary Fund programme—usually three years—by around 50 per cent.

Figures for debt owed by or cancelled for any country are confidential. After a framework agreement is reached at the Paris Club, each creditor negotiates a separate bilateral agreement with the debtor. We would need the consent of the authorities in both debtor and creditor countries before we could provide any figures.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement outlining the response to the comments made by the World Commission of Environment and Development representatives in London on 24 April on the subject of third world debts; and what action is currently undertaken by his Department to encourage the write-down of third world debts by commercial banks.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The Government believe that for those poorest countries whose efforts to achieve economic growth have been hampered by the heaviest debt burdens, debt relief has an important role to play. Five countries have so far benefited from the Prime Minister's Trinidad terms initiative, which the Paris Club began implementing in December. We continue to press for an extension of the terms offered, along the lines of the Prime Minister's original proposals, and for all creditors to participate in debt reduction.

It is true to say that financial flows to developing countries fell during the 1980s. But the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development 1990 survey "Financing and External Debt of Developing Countries", confirmed the recovery in financial flows initiated in 1988-89. Recent experience in Latin America shows that determined adjustment and policy reform efforts—in Mexico and Chile, for example—can quickly attract considerable amounts of external private funds and export credits. Provisional OECD figures show that, when all financial flows are considered, developing countries received $46·4 billion more in 1990 than they paid out.

Arrangements for dealing with commercial bank debt must be a matter for the parties to the loans to negotiate between them, but we continue to urge comparability of treatment between official and commercial debt. The Government fully support decisions to allow the IMF and World bank to provide some of their resources directly in support of commercial bank debt reduction, through the Brady plan and the International Development Association's debt reduction facility. The United Kingdom is financing its share of IMF and World bank resources involved.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Maxwell Pensioners

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the assistance given by his Department to pensioners of the Maxwell group of companies.

Miss Widdecombe: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Waveney (Mr. Porter) on 12 May at column 95.

Respite Care

Mr. Butcher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will review the levels of funding for respite care.

Mr. Burt: People receiving respite care are entitled to claim the higher income support limit appropriate to those in residential care or nursing homes. These limits are reviewed regularly.

Mr. Butcher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people are in receipt of respite care.

Mr. Burt: This information is not available in the form requested.

Income support is available to temporary residents in residential care and nursing homes in the same way as for permanent residents and no distinction is made in the collection of data.

Residential Homes

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the total expenditure on income support payments to residents of *(a)* private nursing homes, *(b)* private residential homes, *(c)* voluntary nursing homes and *(d)* voluntary residential homes during the last financial year.

Mr. Burt: Expenditure is available only for all residential care homes and nursing homes.

	£ billion
Residential care	0·9
Nursing homes	1·0

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many claimants for income support in private or voluntary residential care or nursing homes had claims amended from the higher rate for nursing care to the lower rate for residential care during the previous financial year.

Mr. Burt: The information requested is not available.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his latest estimate of (1) the number of claimants of income support payments in *(a)* private nursing homes, *(b)* private residential homes, *(c)* voluntary nursing homes and *(d)* voluntary residential homes and (2) the proportion of the overall number of residents in each category that this represents.

Mr. Burt: Information is available only for all residential care homes and nursing homes.

It is estimated that 60 to 70 per cent. of residents in residential care and nursing homes are in receipt of income support.

	Number
Residential care	149,600
Nursing homes	103,600

Source: November 1991 quarterly statistical inquiry.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many claimants for income support in private or voluntary residential care or nursing homes had amended claims for the higher nursing care provision met during the previous financial year.

Mr. Burt: The information requested is not available.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his estimate of the likely expenditure during the current financial year on income support payments to members of *(a)* private nursing homes, *(b)* private residential homes, *(c)* voluntary nursing homes and *(d)* voluntary residential homes.

Mr. Burt: Estimated expenditure in the current financial year is available only for all residential care homes and nursing homes.

	£ billion
Residential care	1·1
Nursing homes	1·3

NATIONAL FINANCE

Retail Prices Index

Mr. David Atkinson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he has any plans to reform the retail prices index to bring it in line with other countries in the exchange rate mechanism; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lamont: I informed the House on 6 February 1992, *Official Report*, column *256*, that I have reconvened the Retail Prices Index Advisory Committee to consider the treatment of the council tax in the index and other matters. I have asked the committee in forming its recommendations to take account of the practices in other European Community countries. The Central Statistical Office will also be involved in discussions on harmonising consumer price indices with the Statistical Office of the European Community and statistical offices of other member states.

Sustainable Living

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make it his policy to relate economic policy to potential environmental carrying capacity.

Sir John Cope: A healthy economy is essential if the country is to be able to afford the cost of measures to protect the environment. The Government will continue to pursue policies designed to minimise environmental damage, while ensuring that industry remains internationally competitive.

Bank of Credit and Commerce International

49. **Mr. Vaz:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many Ministers have given evidence to the Bingham inquiry.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 14 May 1992]:* The Prime Minister assured the House on 22 July 1991, *Official Report*, column *759*, that all Ministers and officials would co-operate fully with Lord Justice Bingham's inquiry, and we have done so. A number of Ministers have given evidence.

50. **Mr. Vaz:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many times he has met the governor of the Bank of England since 5 July 1991 to discuss the Bank of Credit and Commerce International; and if he will state the dates of such meetings and what was discussed.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 14 May 1992]:* My right hon. Friend meets the Governor of the Bank of England from time to time to discuss a variety of matters.

SCOTLAND

Rents-to-mortgages Scheme

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many *(a)* expressions of interest there have been and *(b)* applications have been received from tenants under the Government's rents-to-mortgages scheme in Scotland; and what this figure is as a percentage of the total number of tenants eligible to participate in the scheme.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 13 May 1992]:* Over 20,000 expressions of interest and 1,159 applications have been made under the rent-to-mortgage scheme. Those figures represent 5·4 per cent. and 0·3 per cent. respectively of the 370,000 tenants estimated to be eligible for the scheme.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Common Fisheries Policy

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps are currently being undertaken by his Department to ensure that the common fisheries policy takes environmental protection fully into account.

Mr. Curry: We have already endorsed the view expressed in the Commission's recent report on the common fisheries policy, which is forming the basis of the mid-term review of that policy, that environmental aspects of fisheries should be taken into account. The discussion on future action under the CFP is still in progress.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make it his policy to press for the amendment of the common fisheries policy to ensure that all decisions taken under the policy take into account the prevention of effects on ecosystems and marine wildlife.

Mr. Curry: I agree that the common fisheries policy should take into account effects of fishing on the marine environment and whilst the CFP is primarily based on article 43 of the original treaty of Rome, Fisheries Ministers now must have regard to article 130R of the revised treaty which provides for the consideration of environmental matters.

Fishing Gear Selectivity

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how much is currently spent by his Department on studies concerning fishing gear selectivity; and if he has any plans to announce an increase in funding.

Mr. Curry: Fisheries departments currently spend about £1·5 million per year on fishing gear and a significant proportion of this relates to gear selectivity. Most recently, we have implemented measures introducing square mesh panels following such research, and further work on those and other aspects of fishing gear selectivity are in hand. Gear selectivity continues to be a high priority in our research programmes.

TRANSPORT

London Taxi Fares

Mr. Bendall: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement about London taxi fares and fees.

Mr. Norris: The Secretary of State has made an order increasing London taxi fares by about 61 per cent. on average with effect from Saturday, 30 May 1992. The new tariff will incorporate a minimum fare of £1, including an

unchanged hire charge of 40p, for the first 873 yards or three minutes. The rate will then be 20p for every 291 yards or 60 seconds up to 6 miles and 20p for each 194 yards or 40 seconds thereafter.

The Secretary of State has decided that the calculations for any future increases should be based on the average earnings for the whole economy rather than the figure for transport and communication workers in Greater London which was used for the past two years.

The Secretary of State has also increased the fees for licensing London taxi drivers from £70 to £81 and for vehicles from £65 to £78. The increase will take effect on Monday 15 June 1992.

Healey Mills Marshalling Yard

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions his Department have had with British Rail concerning the future of the Healey Mills marshalling yard, Wakefield.

Mr. Freeman: My Department's regional office in Leeds is discussing with British Rail one of the options for improved connections between the M1 and M62. This involves part of the land area occupied by Healey Mills marshalling yard. The Department's published consultation document makes it clear that this option will be pursued only if it does not affect railway operations.

A21

Mr. Speed: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give a time scale for further improvements to the A21 trunk road.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: There are six schemes in the national roads programme with an estimated works cost of some £70 million for the improvement of the A21 trunk road. They are at varying stages of preparation. The timetable for each scheme will depend on the progress that can be made with the design, statutory and other procedures and the availability of funds.

There are also a number of smaller scale works in the regional programme, mostly aimed at improving safety and traffic flow.

M1-M62 Link

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will add to the available public information concerning his proposal for an M1-M62 motorway link a detailed assessment of the noise implications.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: No. It is too early a stage to carry out a detailed assessment of the noise implications of the M1-M62 link road.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will undertake a full environmental impact assessment of his M1-M62 motorway link proposals before his announcement of a preferred route.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: An environmental assessment has been undertaken, appropriate to this early stage of option development.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to be in a position to make public an analysis of the opinions expressed during the public consultation process on his proposed M1-M62 motorway link.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The response to public consultation has been very large so far. It will be some time before a thorough analysis has been completed and I am able to make an announcement.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give details of his Department's proposals for the junction between the M1 motorway and the A636 at Calder Grove, Wakefield under the suggested yellow route for the M1-M62 motorway link, with particular reference to whether it is planned to divert the A636.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: No. It is too early to confirm such detailed junction arrangements.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport by what means his Department has estimated the number of properties likely to be demolished as a result of the proposed M1-M62 motorway link.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The estimation of property demolition was that judged to be required for each option, at this preliminary stage.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment has been made of changes in levels of carbon dioxide, nitrous oxides and low level ozone during the development of his proposals for an M1-M62 motorway link.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: No detailed assessment has been undertaken at this early stage.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment has been made of the extent and implications of farm severance in the development of his proposals for an M1-M62 motorway link.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: At this early stage no assessment has been carried out into the effects of farm severance.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport on how many occasions his officials have met representatives of local authorities and parish or community councils to discuss proposals for an M1-M62 motorway link, detailing the public bodies concerned and the dates upon which such meetings have taken place.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: I will write to the hon. Member with information about meetings with my officials.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will amend his Department's consultation documents and exhibitions relating to the proposals for a M1-M62 motorway link so as to include information regarding the possibility of alternative methods of improving the transport system, including developing the rail and waterway networks and bus services.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: No. The consultation document has been issued in considerable numbers and cannot be amended now. It is considered that alternative methods of improving the transport system would not obviate the need for this link road.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment has been made of the wider effects on woodland areas in the development of his proposals for an M1-M62 motorway link.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The areas of woodland directly affected by the proposed options have been assessed. In addition, woodland with ecological interest has been identified.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether his Department's proposed yellow route for the M1-M62 link road includes a flyover above Cliff road, Great Cliffe, Wakefield, or an elevated road necessitating the removal of the current bridge at Great Cliffe, at the point where the southernmost access road would join the M1.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: It is too early to be specific about the connection between the link road and the M1.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what consideration has been given to the increased use of the existing rail network as an alternative to the construction of an M1-M62 motorway link.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The Government aim to achieve a balance between the various forms of transport so that each can make its proper contribution. It is considered that increased use of the existing rail network will not alter the need for the road significantly.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list those properties within the Wakefield constituency which may be demolished as a result of the construction of an M1-M62 motorway link along *(a)* the proposed yellow route and *(b)* the proposed purple route.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: As far as is possible to judge at this early stage, within the Wakefield constituency, the yellow route could require 11 commercial properties and the purple route one residential property.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment has been made of the implications of contaminated soil movement and dumping during the development of his proposals for an M1-M62 motorway link.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: In developing route options, areas of land known to be contaminated have been identified. Any decision to develop a route across such land would involve a full assessment of all the implications.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects his Department will have completed its assessment of the implications of surface temperature inversion for visibility on sections of the proposed yellow route of the M1-M62 motorway link in the Calder valley.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Detailed consideration of the implications of surface temperature inversion would be given after the decision on whether any of the options should be progressed further.

New Motorways

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport by what means environmental impacts are taken into account in his cost-benefit assessment of new motorway proposals.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Decisions on motorway and other trunk road schemes are based on full assessment of all the relevant effects. Some of the effects, including construction costs, time and accident savings, and changes in vehicle operating costs, are valued in monetary terms. Environmental effects are not give monetary values, but a comprehensive assessment is made, covering noise, visual, ecological, air quality and other relevant effects. The techniques used are described in the Department's "Manual of Environmental Appraisal".

Transport Spending

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proportion of his Department's spending on transport is allocated in the current financial year to each of the following sectors: *(a)* highways, *(b)* railways, *(c)* water transport and *(d)* other; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: In 1992-93, the proportions are expected to be about:

(a) Highways, 45 per cent.
(b) Public Transport, 49·5 per cent.
(c) Water (sea) 0·5 per cent.
(d) Other, 5 per cent.

Inland water transport is the responsibility of the Department of the Environment and is not included in *(c)*. *(d)* includes air transport as well as expenditure which cannot be allocated by mode.

Further details are available in "The Government's Expenditure Plans for Transport, 1992-93 to 1994-95: Department of Transport Report 1992", Command 1907.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Renewable Energy

Mr. Dafis: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make it his policy to abolish the 1988 deadline under the non-fossil fuel obligation for the development of renewable source energy.

Mr. Eggar: My Department is in discussion with the European Commission about the 1998 limitation.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what proportion of Her Majesty's Government's target for renewable energy he expects to originate from Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The Government are currently working towards a figure of 1,000 MW of new electricity generating plant from renewable energy sources by the year 2000. There is no separate figure for Northern Ireland at present. A study is being carried out on the potential for renewable energy in Northern Ireland and the results will assist with setting a renewable target within the overall United Kingdom figure.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what estimates the Government have made of the contribution that sources of renewable energy could make to achieving the United Kingdom's stabilisation target for CO_2 emissions by the year 2000.

Mr. Eggar: I refer the hon. Lady to the reply which I gave to the hon. Member for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths) on 14 May, *Official Report*, column *170-71*.

Compact Discs

Ms. Quin: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if his Department intends to bring forward any proposals concerning the wholesale and retail prices of compact discs.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The Office of Fair Trading recently completed detailed inquiries into the recorded music market, with particular reference to the price of compact discs. It found that no producer or retailer had a market share in excess of 25 per cent.—the threshold for a scale monopoly under the monopoly provisions of the Fair Trading Act 1973—and that there was no evidence of collusion between recorded music producers or retailers, or between producers and retailers. It concluded that prices of compact discs had settled at the level which the market was willing to bear. There was no evidence that the profits of record producers were excessive. In the absence of any evidence of collusion or anti-competitive conduct the Director General of Fair Trading concluded that no action under the competition legislation was appropriate but the OFT proposes to keep the market under review.

Environmental Protection Technology

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what proportion of the European market for environmental protection technology is held by United Kingdom companies; and which EEC country has the biggest proportion of the market.

Mr. Leigh: United Kingdom companies are well represented among the top European environmental firms in major sectors such as water treatment, waste management and consultancy; and United Kingdom companies are selling environmental goods and services throughout west and east Europe.

Figures on environmental market shares would depend on assumptions on technologies included. The evidence available suggests that United Kingdom companies are relatively well placed but face competition especially from their German and French counterparts. The market in Europe, as elsewhere, certainly represents important opportunities for United Kingdom companies.

British Coal

Mr. Dobson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the organisations or individuals retained to advise or assist him or his Department on the privatisation of British Coal who were not appointed by competitive tender.

Mr. Eggar: All consultants retained in connection with coal privatisation have been appointed following competitive tenders.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the organisations and individuals retained by him or his Department to advise or assist on the privatisation of British Coal, giving in each case, the date their appointment commenced and the aspect on which they are advising.

Mr. Eggar: Information concerning consultants who have been appointed to give advice in connection with the privatisation of the coal industry is as follows:

Consultant	*Date contract commenced*	*Nature of advice*
N. M. Rothschild and Sons Ltd.	30 May 1991	Financial
Touche Ross and Co.	12 June 1991	Accounting
Messrs Clifford Chance	19 June 1991	Legal
John T. Boyd Company	5 August 1991	Mining
Wardell Armstrong	5 August 1991	Mining
Mr. P. Williams	7 January 1992	Safety

Clearing Banks

Mr. Caborn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment he has made of the effect on small businesses of the number of clearing banks.

Mr. Leigh: The President of the Board of Trade will consider a possible offer from Lloyds bank for Midland bank in the light of considered advice from the Director General of Fair Trading. This advice will include an assessment of all aspects of the merger affecting the public interest, including the implications for small businesses.

Mr. Caborn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the services provided by the clearing banks for small businesses.

Mr. Leigh: In recent years, banks have played an important part in meeting the financial needs of small businesses and have introduced a wide range of new products and services for their small business customers. Details of those products and services are set out in the codes of practice for small business customers which all the major banks have now produced. Clearing banks meet the vast majority of small businesses' needs for finance, currently providing over £40 billion of loans to small companies.

Mr. Devlin: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment he has made of the implications for individual banking customers of a reduction in the number of clearing banks.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The President of the Board of Trade and I will consider the possible offer by Lloyds bank for Midland bank in the light of considered advice from the Director General of Fair Trading. This advice will include an assessment of all aspects of the merger affecting the public interest including the implications for individual customers.

Bank Mergers

Mr. Caborn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to meet representatives of *(a)* the Confederation of British Industry, *(b)* the Association of British Chambers of Commerce and *(c)* the Small Business Bureau to discuss bank mergers.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The President of the Board of Trade and I have no plans to meet representatives of these or other organisations to discuss the current merger proposals involving the Midland bank. In order to act in an evenhanded way, we are following the normal practice in merger situations of not receiving direct representations from interested parties but asking them to make their representations to the Director General of Fair Trading. The President of the Board of Trade will consider the proposals in the light of the advice he will receive from the director general which will take account of all the views and arguments that have been expressed.

Assisted Areas

Mr. Morgan: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what progress he has made with the review of assisted areas; and what weight he will give to relative unemployment levels *(a)* on the post-1982 counting method, *(b)* the pre-1982 counting method and *(c)* gross domestic product per head relative to United Kingdom average in any revision he proposes to make to United Kingdom assisted area status designation and boundaries.

Mr. Sainsbury: The Government indicated before the election that a review of the assisted areas map would be conducted early in this Parliament. We are now considering how to take that commitment forward and are looking at the criteria to be applied. I hope to make an announcement on this shortly.

ENVIRONMENT

Estate Action

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to give form B approval to the estate action bid for the Bonamy estate, London SE16; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: A form B bid has not yet been submitted. Officials are continuing to discuss progress with the council.

Hazardous Waste

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps are being undertaken to improve the availability and quality of data relating to waste published by his Department.

Mr. Maclean: The first stage of an informal in-house review of waste statistics involving policy divisions with responsibilities in this area and co-ordinated by the environmental protection statistics division was completed at the end of last year. As a result of this review a number of immediate steps have been taken to improve information availability: statisticians in the DOE have co-operated with the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy in the development of new surveys of waste collection and disposal authorities to gather information on household and other municipal wastes; a programme to develop independent methods of assessing household waste arisings and its composition is also planned; and reviewing the content and form of the annual survey of special waste arisings.

A considerable amount of underpinning research work is also required to develop appropriate methodologies for collecting data on other waste streams and the results of the review are being used to develop those strands in the Department's research and development programme.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to prohibit the incineration of wastes containing heavy metals, organochlorines and other organic halogens within the United Kingdom.

Mr. Maclean: This would not be appropriate. Incineration is an important waste disposal option. However, it is essential to apply tight environmental regulation to incineration as to other waste disposal methods. Existing controls are being strengthened through implementation of part I of the Environmental Protection Act 1990. This already covers new plant and will extend to existing plant later this year. Proposals have also been published for a new European Community directive on hazardous waste incineration.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to ban the trade in hazardous wastes to and from the United Kingdom.

Mr. Maclean: Negotiations are in progress on a draft regulation on the supervision and control of shipments of waste within, into and out of the European Community. The regulation will enable the United Kingdom to ratify the Basel convention on the control of transboundary movements of hazardous wastes and their disposal. The Government believe that all developed countries should become self-sufficient in final disposal of waste, but that imports of hazardous waste should continue from developing countries which are unable to deal safely with such waste. The Government consider that international movements of waste for recovery should continue subject to appropriate environmental controls, such as those included in the recent decision by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development on the control of transfrontier movements of waste destined for recovery operations.

Emissions

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish the latest available figures for the difference between the level of emissions and the level the biosphere can safely absorb.

Mr. Maclean: The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change estimates that the biosphere and other components of the carbon cycle absorb almost half of current man-made emissions of carbon dioxide. We have no information on the amount of carbon dioxide that the biosphere can safely absorb.

Ozone-Depleting Substances

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the progress being made towards the halting of production of products containing *(a)* chlorofluorocarbons, *(b)* hydrochlorofluorocarbons, *(c)* methyl chloroform, *(d)* carbon tetrachloride and *(e)* halons.

Mr. Maclean: The Montreal protocol and associated European legislation control the production and consumption of CFCs, halons, carbon tetrachloride and methyl chloroform themselves, rather than the production of products containing them. The Government are committed to phasing out production of those substances by the end of 1995 at the latest, and production of products will diminish as the supply of the chemicals is phased out. The protocol is likely to be extended in November to include controls of HCFCs, and the European Community has proposed that those controls should consist of a quantitative limit on consumption, restriction of possible uses and a phase-out date.

Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will review the level and quality of the enforcement of CITES regulations by authorities in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Maclean: The enforcement of the CITES regulations is kept under constant review by my Department through regular contacts with the police authorities and Her Majesty's Customs and Excise, which are primarily responsible for enforcing the regulations. We are currently examining proposed new European Community controls on trade in wildlife, and the enforcement of those controls will need to be considered by the Community as a whole.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether the EC CITES committee temporary ban on import of lizards and other reptiles applies to all EC nations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: The temporary ban on the import of certain species from Indonesia was agreed by the EC CITES committee and applies to all EC member states.

Radioactive Waste (Broomfield Hospital)

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the outcome of the serving of an enforcement notice by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution on the Mid-Essex hospital service in February over the unauthorised receipt and storage of radioactive waste at Broomfield hospital in Chelmsford.

Mr. Maclean: The outcome of the serving of an enforcement notice on the Mid-Essex hospital service is that Broomfield hospital is no longer receiving radioactive waste from other hospitals and is not accumulating such waste. Radioactive waste being produced by the hospital itself is incinerated in accordance with authorisations granted under the Radioactive Substances Act 1960 and the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

Rural Housing

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to promote affordable housing in rural areas.

Mr. Baldry: We have taken a variety of measures since 1988 to boost supply of low-cost housing in rural areas. We have substantially increased public resources through the Housing Corporation for new investment by housing associations, with a target for new social housing under their special rural programme of 2,400 in 1992-93. In 1991-92 the corporation approved 2,355 units against a target of 1,500, more than making up for the previous year's shortfall. We have also made £30 million available this year for rural local authorities, to provide over 1,000 new social housing units. Amended planning guidance permits development of low-cost housing for local needs on small sites not otherwise designated for housing.

Hedgerows

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to introduce legislation to protect hedgerows.

Mr. Maclean: I refer the hon. Gentleman to my answer of 14 May to the hon. Member for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths), *Offical Report*, column *198*.

Homelessness

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assistance his Department proposes to give over the next two years to those charitable organisations which provide shelter to homeless people in Leeds.

Mr. Baldry: For 1992-93 the Department has offered financial assistance under section 73 of the Housing Act 1985 to the voluntary organisations Caring for Life, Nightstop, St. Anne's Shelter and Leeds Action to Create Homes, all of which are projects which provide direct practical help to homeless people in Leeds. Funding for future years is subject to negotiation.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many units of permanent accommodation are to be provided in 1992-93 in *(a)* West Yorkshire and *(b)* Leeds West for mentally ill homeless people moving out of specialist short-term hostels funded by his Department; what resources are to be provided in 1992-93 to meet the needs of these people once they are ready to move into more permanent accommodation; and what arrangements he has to co-ordinate the provision of more permanent accommodation.

Mr. Baldry: My Department does not fund directly specialist short-term hostels for mentally ill people. Total housing investment programme allocations made to west Yorkshire local authorities for 1992-93 are as follows:

	£ million
Bradford	11·896
Calderdale	7·508
Kirklees	11·917
Leeds	27·424
Wakefield	10·800

Within their total resources, it is for each authority to consider all the housing needs in its area, including the need for permanent accommodation, and to determine its priorities accordingly.

Smoke Control Areas

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will introduce controls over sales of unauthorised fuels in smoke control areas.

Mr. Maclean: The sale associated with delivery and the acquisition of unauthorised fuels for use in a smoke control area are already offences under the Clean Air Act 1968. We propose to introduce a ban on the straightforward retail sale of such fuel in smoke control areas as soon as possible.

Pollution

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will publish the results of the recent national nitrogen dioxide diffusion tube air pollution survey.

Mr. Maclean: I refer the hon. Lady to the answer I have given today to my hon. Friend the Member for Basildon (Mr. Amess).

Noise

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he intends to publish codes of practice for the minimisation of noise from clay pigeon shooting, audible bird scarers, water sports, and off-road motorcycling.

Mr. Maclean: A draft code of practice on clay pigeon shooting was produced by the Clay Pigeon Shooting Association. Two consultation exercises have demonstrated that there are complex technical issues which have still not been resolved. The Institution of Environmental Health Officers is to issue guidance to its own members.

Government officials are working with the National Farmers Union on a code of practice on the use of audible bird scarers.

Water sports was not a subject recommended for coverage by a code in the report of the noise review working party published in October 1990 and I have no plans to prepare one at present.

A joint working group convened by the noise council has submitted a draft code for off-road motorcycling for approval. I shall consider that request as soon as possible.

Carbon Dioxide

Mr. Hargreaves: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on his report to the European Commission on the United Kingdom's strategy for limiting carbon dioxide emissions.

Mr. Howard: We are already taking steps to limit carbon dioxide emissions. Earlier this week I announced a new agreement with the energy utilities and Ofgas for the establishment of an energy saving trust. This is an important further initiative which will make a real contribution to the United Kingdom's part in the international efforts to reduce emissions of CO_2.

In the light of this and other recent initiatives, I have now given the European Commission a report on the United Kingdom strategy for reducing emissions of CO_2. This builds on the strategy first set out in the Environment White Paper, "This Common Inheritance", and given to the Commission last year. Copies have been placed in the Library.

Nitrogen Dioxide

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the results of the survey of nitrogen dioxide concentrations in the United Kingdom carried out for his Department by Warren Spring laboratory from July to December last year.

Mr. Maclean: The report of the survey is being published today. I am arranging for copies to be placed in the Library of the House. I am very grateful both to Warren Spring laboratory and to the many local authorities which have co-operated in this excellent piece of work.

The survey covered over 300 sites throughout the United Kingdom. A similar survey was carried out in 1986. Comparison of the results shows that average concentrations of nitrogen dioxide (NO_2) have risen by 35 per cent. over the period, largely as a result of motor traffic growth.

The European Community has set a limit value on NO_2 concentrations in order to protect human health and the environment, based on studies carried out for the World Health Organisation. The survey results gives us further reassurance that Britain is not in breach of this. There is no evidence that, at current United Kingdom levels, NO_2 causes irreversible health effects. But of course we wish to see NO_2 pollution levels diminish in future, since high concentrations can cause breathing discomfort in susceptible people.

Much action is already in hand to curb traffic pollution. An emissions test was included in the MOT test last November. Tough European Community standards for new cars will come into effect from the end of this year, reducing harmful emissions from new vehicles by about 80 per cent. A range of new measures is also being implemented to cut traffic congestion and pollution through better traffic management, parking controls and improved public transport. Those initiatives will take time to achieve their full impact, but we should see dramatic improvements in air quality in a few years'.

Careful monitoring of the situation is important in the meantime. The report confirms that our continuous monitoring sites for NO_2 are well-chosen, but suggests further studies of the possible need for supplementary sites. Maximum public access to monitoring information is also crucial. Daily bulletins and forecasts of air quality, with associated health guidance, have been issued since October 1990, and are now available on a new Freephone number, (0800 556677), on BBC CEEFAX (page 196) and on television weather reports.

Housing Repossessions

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give his latest estimate of the number of people likely to lose their homes in England in 1992 as a consequence of mortgage arrears and repossession.

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 13 May 1992]:* My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced on 19 December 1991 a package of measures agreed with the Council of Mortgage Lenders to reduce the number of repossessions. The Government undertook to legislate for the direct payment to lenders of the mortgage interest element of income support. My right hon. Friend also announced the lifting of stamp duty on transactions up to £250,000 for a period of eight months. The Government enacted legislation to implement those measures before the general election.

As part of the December package, the CML members undertook to advance £750 million to mortgage rescue schemes. Since then, 10 lenders have announced details of their schemes, including better counselling and arrears management to enable borrowers to remain in their own homes; lower interest rates for a specified period for homeowners in difficulties; reduced mortgage payments in return for the lender's taking a share in the equity; and mortgage-to-rent schemes. The combined effect of the measures taken by the Government and lenders will be to reduce the number of repossessions in 1992 and restore confidence to the housing market.

My right hon. Friends the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Secretary of State for the Environment will be meeting the CML to review progress on 2 June.

The CML figures of arrears and possessions for the first half of this year are due to be published in the middle of August.

Antarctica

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to *(a)* ensure the removal of all United Kingdom abandoned bases in Antarctica, *(b)* repeal the Antarctic Minerals Act 1989 and *(c)* ratify the 1991 Antarctica environmental protocol.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I have been asked to reply.

The Government are fully committed to implementation of the environmental protocol to the Antarctic treaty. Ratification of the protocol and repeal of the Antarctic Minerals Act 1989 will depend on the introduction of legislation to give effect to the provisions of the protocol.

The British antarctic survey has undertaken a survey of all accessible abandoned United Kingdom bases in Antarctica. A programme either to remove the bases, or to retain some as emergency refuges or historic sites is in preparation.

DEFENCE

Ethnic Minorities

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when his Department last conducted a survey of the ethnic origin of its employees; when it next plans to do so; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: Ethnic monitoring of all civilian staff was introduced in 1988 as an important element of the MOD's equal opportunities policies. A further survey of all staff who did not reply to the initial survey was conducted in March 1991 and resulted in a 90 per cent. response rate. Ethnic monitoring is a continuous process in the MOD and all new entrants, except casuals, are surveyed on joining.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many and what percentage of officers in grades 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7, respectively, and overall in his Department are members of ethnic minorities.

Mr. Aitken: The information as at 1 April 1992, based on voluntary surveys of non-industrial staff, excluding those in executive agencies is:

	Number	*Percentage of staff in grade*
Grade 1	0	—
Grade 2	0	—
Grade 3	0	—
Grade 4	0	—
Grade 5	0	—
Grade 6	3	0·6
Grade 7	13	0·7

Total non-industrial staff 80,574
Total respondents to ethnic origin survey 72,505 (90 per cent.)
Total self-declared ethnic minority staff 1,508 (1·9 per cent.)

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what steps he has taken to recruit members of ethnic minorities in top grades of employment at his Department.

Mr. Aitken: MOD recruitment at grade 7 level is undertaken by the Recruitment and Assessment Services agency—RAS—on behalf of the civil service commissioners. RAS has put in place a range of measures to aid the recruitment of ethnic minorities. The principles of fair and open competition continue to apply including the commitment to equal opportunities. Above grade 7 level, external recruitment does not often occur.

Radioactive Waste

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what technical and financial provisions have been made for the decommissioning and storage or disposal of radioactive waste materials arising therefrom, for *(a)* Polaris submarines and *(b)* Trident submarines; and what discussions have taken place with his American counterpart over the United States plans in this field.

Mr. Aitken: It is not our practice to make public our detailed plans and costings for decommissioning nuclear submarines. A long-term policy for the disposal of all decommissioned nuclear submarines is being considered but no decisions have yet been reached. Currently, they are stored safely afloat at naval bases where de-fuelling and removal of re-usable equipment takes place.

There are regular exchanges between the United States and United Kingdom Governments on all nuclear matters under the 1958 mutual defence agreement and we are aware of United States plans for decommissioning and disposal.

Payment of Commissions

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his policy regarding the payment of commissions to assist defence exports.

Mr. Aitken: My Department does not employ business agents in the negotiation of Government-to-Government defence export contracts and does not pay commissions.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what role the Defence Export Services Organisation has in providing defence contractors with advice about the payment of commissions to assist defence exports.

Mr. Aitken: The Defence Export Services Organisation provides, on request, a wide range of advice to companies on defence export markets, including advice on local laws and regulations governing commission payments.

Saudi Arabia

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the support provided for defence exports to Saudi Arabia.

Mr. Aitken: Within MOD, support for defence exports to Saudi Arabia is provided by the Defence Export Services Organisation which, within the constraints of Government policy, provides assistance and advice to United Kingdom companies seeking to market and sell defence equipment and services to the Saudi Arabian armed forces.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Visas

Mr. Speed: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list those countries which are members of the Council of Europe which require visas from United Kingdom visitors and those from whom the United Kingdom requires visas for their nationals.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Member states of the Council of Europe whose nationals require visas to visit the United Kingdom are Bulgaria, Poland and Turkey. United Kingdom nationals also require visas to visit those countries.

Nagorno Karabakh

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what aid the Government are giving to relieve the situation in Nagorno Karabakh both bilaterally and multilaterally; and what discussions the Minister for Overseas Developoment has had on the opening of a humanitarian corridor for relief supplies with our international partners.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Government have contributed to a 1 million ecu EC aid package to alleviate the suffering of both Azeri and Armenian refugees from the Nagorno Karabakh region. The Government also support the International Committee of the Red Cross which has set up an operation in Nagorno Karabakh.

Britain has been active in the search for a negotiated solution to the Nagorno Karabakh dispute through the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe. The opening of a humanitarian aid corridor is part of the process the CSCE has outlined. We have supported this idea in our discussions with other Governments.

Iraqi Kurdistan

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what support Her Majesty's Government will offer to the Kurdish Front Alliance in its preparations for the elections in Iraqi Kurdistan; and what recognition Her Majesty's Government propose to give to the forthcoming elections in Iraqi Kurdistan and to their result.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have told Kurdish political leaders in Iraq that it is in their own interests to work together in opposing Saddam Hussein's repression and in bringing an end to the economic blockade which he has imposed on northern Iraq. We hope that regional elections will help achieve this.

We support the Kurds' aim of autonomy, not independence, within Iraq's existing borders. Kurdish leaders have told us that this is what they want.

Foreign Affairs Council

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the outcome of the Foreign Affairs Council held on 11 and 12 May.

Mr. Hurd: My right hon. Friend the Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs and I represented the United Kingdom at the Foreign Affairs Council on 11 May.

The Council continued its discussion of the Commission's future financing package for 1993-97, focusing in particular on the Commission's expenditure proposals. It also discussed immigration policy and the related issue of internal frontier controls. I reiterated Her Majesty's Government's position that the UK does not agree that article 8a requires the abolition of all frontier controls on people at the Community's internal frontiers.

INDEX TO THE

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

SIXTH SERIES **VOLUME 207**

SESSION 1992–93

27th April—15th May 1992

SCOPE OF THE INDEX, ARRANGEMENT AND ABBREVIATIONS

This index is derived from the House of Commons Library's Parliamentary On-Line Information System (POLIS), and the subject terms used are based on those used in POLIS. There are often changes in column numbering, etc, between the daily part or weekly Hansard (which simply collects together the daily parts without revision) and the bound volume. The index for the bound volume is revised to take account of these changes and cannot therefore, be used in connection with the daily part or weekly Hansard. For these versions use the Fortnightly Index.

Scope and arrangement of the Index

Oral and Written Parliamentary Questions are indexed under subject headings and the names of Members asking and Ministers replying to them. Questions are not listed under the names of Departments replying. Departmental listings can be arrived at indirectly by looking under the names of the Minister(s) of that Department. There are, however, the headings 'Northern Ireland', 'Scotland', and 'Wales' under which one can find not only most Questions answered by the Northern Ireland Office, Scottish Office, Welsh Office but also Questions about these areas of the United Kingdom which are answered by other Departments. Ministerial statements are indexed under subject headings, under 'Ministerial statements' and the names of Ministers making them and Members speaking on them. General debates are indexed under broad subject headings and under the names of all Members and Ministers taking part. Debates on legislation (Bills, Orders, Regulations etc.) are indexed under the name of the Bill, Statutory Instrument etc, under subject headings and under the names of those taking part.

Rulings and Statements by Speaker and deputies are brought together under the heading Speaker's rulings and statements.

Other contributions by Speaker and deputies appear under the heading Speaker.

Opposition Day Debates, Estimates Day Debates and Standing Order No. 10 applications are listed under those respective headings and under subject headings too.

The date of each item except Parliamentary Questions is inserted immediately before the reference.

Members' names are given in the form by which they prefer to be known and are printed in bold-italics. Under their names, entries are arranged under one of the two headings *Debates etc* (to include interventions, statements, points of order and so on) or *Questions*.

Abbreviations

Bills 1R = first reading, 2R = second reading, Money res = money resolution, Com = Committee stage, Rep = Report stage, 3R = third reading, amendt/amendts = amendment/amendments, * = matter taken formally, without debate.

Column numbers followed by the letter W refer to Written Questions. These appear at the end of each daily part or volume with their own sequence of column numbers printed in italics.

A12
74w

A13
Road works 107w

A21
Road works 227w

A636
228w

A664
73w

Abbott, Ms Diane
Debates etc.
Queen's speech, Privatisation (11:05:92) 379, 380
Questions
Hackney 125w
London Ambulance Service 80-1w
Metropolitan Police 201w
Rents to mortgages scheme, Private sector housing 607

Abortion
149w
Medical ethics 149w

Abortion Act 1967
Questions
149w

Absent voting
61w
British residents abroad 20w, 116w, 206w
Election administration 735
Northern Ireland 76w
Scotland 162w
South Africa 206w

Abu Dhabi
Bank of Credit & Commerce International 26w, 193w

Access funds
63w

Access to buildings
Polling stations 737

Accident & emergency departments
Greater London 480
Haringey 480
South Glamorgan 37w

Accidents
Armed forces casualties 494
Scotland 92w

Accountant in Bankruptcy
(08:05:92) 275

Acquittals
Criminal appeals 367

Addresses to the Crown
Queen's speech (06:05:92) 53-7

Adley, Mr Robert
Debates etc.
Access to Parliament, Points of order (06:05:92) 48-9
Queen's speech, Privatisation (11:05:92) 379, 418, 419, 427-9
Speaker's election (27:04:92) 13-4
Questions
Business statements 752
Channel tunnel, Trains 108w
Concrete, Pollution control 614
Family doctors, Budgeting 80w
Noise control 126w
Railway transport, EC law 107w
Road traffic, Greater London 201w

Administration of justice
Expenditure 59-60w
Interpreters 209-10w

Advisory Conciliation & Arbitration Service
Annual reports 6w

Aerosols
Air pollution 604-5

Africa
Overseas aid 31w

Agricultural land
Radioactive fallout 180w

Agricultural workers
Pay 3w

Agriculture
Statistics 69w

AIDS
Health services 485

Aids for handicapped
VAT 163-4w

Ainger, Mr Nick
Debates etc.
Maiden speech (14:05:92) 838-42
Padiham power station, Orimulsion (14:05:92) 838-42
Questions
Development areas, Dyfed 186w
Transport, Republic of Ireland 218w
Unemployment, Pembrokeshire 38w
Young offenders, Prisoners on remand 737-8

Ainsworth, Mr Robert
Debates etc.
Maiden speech (12:05:92) 538-40
Queen's speech, Environment local government & education (12:05:92) 538-40

Air force
Helicopters 152w

Air pollution
Aerosols 604-5
Carbon dioxide 234w
Child health 150w
Hydrofluorochlorocarbons 604
Nitrogen dioxide 236-8w
Orimulsion 121w, 614-5

Air pollution control
Carbon dioxide 104w, 132w, 139w, 237w
Ferro Alloys & Metals 131w
Hydrofluorochlorocarbons 605
Ozone layer 234w
Synthetic fibres 138w

Airport & Airspace Capacity Working Group
188-9w

Airports
South East region 188-9w

***Aitken, Mr Jonathan**, Minister of State for Defence Procurement*
Questions
Arms trade, Export promotion 240w
Arms trade, Indonesia 173-4w
Arms trade, Iraq 156w
Arms trade, Saudi Arabia 240w
Arms trade, South Africa 155-6w
Defence equipment 174-5w
Defence expenditure, Disclosure of information 153w
Defence Export Services Organisation 240w
Defence Export Services Organisation, Audit 91-2w
Defence Export Services Organisation, Indonesia 174w
Defence research 153w
Defence review 154w
Guided weapons, Defence procurement 154w
Ministry of Defence, Ethnic monitoring 239w
Ministry of Defence, Higher civil servants 239-40w
Navy, Defence procurement 155w
Nuclear submarines, Decommissioning 240w
Nuclear weapons, Radioactive wastes 50w
Project Al Yamamah, Audit 91w
Project Al Yamamah, Westland Helicopters 91w
Rosyth Dockyard, Manpower 153w

***Aitken, Mr Jonathan**—continued*
Trident submarines, Military ceremonies 50w

***Alison, Rt Hon Michael**, Second Church Estates Commissioner*
Debates etc.
Queen's speech, Privatisation (11:05:92) 394-8
Questions
Clergy 40w
Meat, Food hygiene 124w

Allen, Mr Graham
Questions
Maxwell companies, Pension funds 223w

Alliance & Leicester (Girobank) Bill 1991/92
Debates etc.
2R order read (13:05:92) 601, (14:05:92) 729

Alternative energy
230w
Electricity generation 169w
Northern Ireland 230w
Research finance 169w

Amess, Mr David
Debates etc.
Local government finance, England (14:05:92) 766-7
Queen's speech (06:05:92) 141-4
Road safety (15:05:92) 893-7
Questions
Nitrogen dioxide, Air pollution 237-8w
Victim support schemes 201w

Ancram, Mr Michael
Debates etc.
Queen's speech, Environment local government & education (12:05:92) 556-7

Anderson, Mr Donald
Questions
Coastal erosion, South Wales 362

Anderson, Ms Janet
Debates etc.
Padiham power station, Orimulsion (14:05:92) 836
Questions
Dept of Social Security local offices, Rawtenstall 220w
Health services 81-2w

Anglian Water
602-3

Angola
Homicide 112w

Animal Procedures Committee
Public appointments 206w

Animal welfare
Battery hens 179w
Transport of animals 179w

Annual reports
Advisory Conciliation & Arbitration Service 6w
Interception of Communications Commissioner 172w

Anorexia
487

Antarctic
Environment protection 239w

Antarctic Minerals Act 1989
Questions
239w

Antitank missiles
BAOR 153w

Ards
Council house waiting lists 168w

Areas of outstanding natural beauty
Wales 218-9w

Armed forces
Educational qualifications 155w
Ethnic monitoring 175w

Armed forces casualties
Accidents 494

Armed forces deployment
Channel tunnel 50w
Yugoslavia 174w

Armed forces medical services
Armed forces pay 3w

Armed forces pay
Armed forces medical services 3w
Cambodia 174w
Yugoslavia 174w

Armed forces recruitment
Disclosure of information 155w

Armed forces storage depots
49w

Armed forces training
Disclosure of information 153w
Thailand 153w

Arms trade
Export promotion 240w
Indonesia 173-4w
Iraq 89w, 144w, 156w, 171w
Saudi Arabia 240w
South Africa 155-6w

Armstrong, Ms Hilary
Debates etc.
Queen's speech, Privatisation (11:05:92) 463
Queen's speech, Public expenditure (07:05:92) 180, 204-7, 263
Questions
Community care 486

Army
Helicopters 152w

Arnold, Mr Jacques
Debates etc.
Queen's speech, Foreign policy (08:05:92) 325-8
Queen's speech, Public expenditure (07:05:92) 236, 241
Questions
Doctors' list of patients 81w
Regional planning & development, South East region 611

Arnold, Sir Thomas
Debates etc.
Queen's speech, Economic situation (13:05:92) 658-60
Queen's speech, Privatisation (11:05:92) 388
Queen's speech, Public expenditure (07:05:92) 176
Speaker's election (27:04:92) 4
Questions
Blue Arrow, Dept of Trade inquiries 87w
Central banks, Economic & monetary union 113w
Citizen's Charter 496
Dentists, Pay 85w
Hillsborough Stadium Inquiry 208w
Immigration applications, Members 206w
International Fund for Agricultural Development, UK contributions 141w
Legal aid, Expenditure 210w
Local government revenue, Capital investment 127w
M66, Road construction 73w
Maxwell companies, Pension funds 95w
Non-teaching staff, Manpower 65-6w
Orchestras, Arts finance 122w
Public expenditure 78w
Social security benefits uprating 96w
Stockport bypass, Road construction 72w
Teachers, Manpower 66w
Town & country planning 133w

Arts Council
122w

Arts finance
Orchestras 122w

Asbestosis
Damages 41w
Scotland 41w

Ashby, Mr David
Debates etc.
Queen's speech, Public expenditure (07:05:92) 211-6

Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Debates etc.
Queen's speech (06:05:92) 74-80
Speaker's election (27:04:92) 24
Questions
Carbon tax 743-4

Ashton, Mr Joseph
Debates etc.
Members' oath & affirmation, Points of order (28:04:92) 29
Questions
Local government reform 616

Assaults on police
Offensive weapons 733

Assisted areas
233w

Asthma
Chlorofluorocarbons 84w
Medical equipment 84w

Atkins, Mr Robert, Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office
Debates etc.
Queen's speech, Economic situation (13:05:92) 708
Questions
Civil service agencies, Driving licences 106w
Coastal areas, Environment protection 211-2w
Council house waiting lists, Ards 168w

Atkinson, Mr David
Questions
Absent voting, Election administration 735
Angola, Homicide 112w
Bus services, Monopolies 108w
European Security Conference Parliamentary Assembly 105w
Income support, Water charges 140w
Macedonia, Recognition of states 190w
Manufacturing industries, Manpower 150-1w
Moldavia, Know-how Fund 110w
Parole, Terminal care 116w
Retail price index, Council tax 225w

Attendance allowance
Social security claims 100w

Attorney General
33w

Audit
Defence contracts 91w
Defence Export Services Organisation 91-2w
NHS 85-6w
Project Al Yamamah 91w

Audit Commission for Local Authorities in England & Wales
Local government finance 127w

Austin-Walker, Mr John
Debates etc.
Finance Bill, Ways & means res (14:05:92) 799-802
Local government finance, England (14:05:92) 767
Maiden speech (14:05:92) 799-802

Back pain
484

Bahai sect
Iran 193w

Baker, Rt Hon Kenneth
Debates etc.
Queen's speech, Addresses to the Crown (06:05:92) 53-6

Balance of trade
Construction materials 12w

Baldry, Mr Tony, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Dept of the Environment
Questions
Bricks 134w
Building industry 129w
City challenge, Burnley 612
Coastal areas, Environment protection 196w
Construction materials, Balance of trade 12w
Council house sales, Local government revenue 608
Council housing, Stockport 609
Defective housing, Council housing 606
Defective housing, Housing investment programmes 605
Defective housing, Liverpool 606
Empty housing, Council housing 611-3
Empty housing, Homelessness 612-3
Empty housing, Manchester 612
Empty housing, Private sector housing 612
Energy conservation, Insulation 133w
Environmental impact assessment 130w, 133-4w
Estate Action, Bonamy Estate 233w
Estate Action, Expenditure 126w
Homelessness 128w
Homelessness, Council housing 14w, 609-10
Homelessness, Government grants to voluntary organisations 236w
Homelessness, Mortgage defaulters 13-4w
Housing, Mentally ill 236w
Housing, Rural areas 235w
Housing associations, Housing completions 56w
Housing construction, Local government revenue 609
Housing Defects Act 1984 127-8w
Housing standards, Newcastle-under-Lyme 132w
Local government finance, Central-local government relations 609
Mortgage defaulters 238-9w
Official cars 134w
Official cars, Costs 134w
Planning permission, Extractive industries 195w
Planning permission, Waste disposal 12w
Pollution, Mining 138w
Regional planning & development, South East region 198w
Rents to mortgages scheme 56w
Trespass, Transient people 129-30w

Bangladesh
Human rights 25-6w

Bank of Credit & Commerce International
23w, 225w
Abu Dhabi 26w, 193w
Bank of England 225w
Compensation 23w

Bank of Credit & Commerce International Inquiry
Ministers 225w

Bank of England
Bank of Credit & Commerce International 225w

Bankruptcy (Scotland) Act 1985
Questions
Departmental responsibilities 2w

Bankruptcy (Scotland) Bill 1992/93
Debates etc.
1R (08:05:92) 275
House of Commons procedure (15:05:92) 911

Banks
Small businesses 232w

Banks, Mr Tony
Debates etc.
Queen's speech (06:05:92) 66
Queen's speech, Foreign policy (08:05:92) 277-8, 284, 292, 334

Banks, Mr Tony—continued
Queen's speech, Privatisation (11:05:92) 375
Speaker's election (27:04:92) 25
Sub judice, Points of order (12:05:92) 497
Terrorism, Intelligence services (08:05:92) 304
Questions
Armed forces casualties, Accidents 494
Boundary Commission for England, Parliamentary constituencies 60w
Channel tunnel, Railway network 108w
Channel tunnel, Stratford Station 108w
Channel Tunnel Rail Link Forum, London Channel Tunnel Group 108w
County Hall 127w
Diplomatic relations 110w
Diplomatic service, Uniforms 110w
Electoral register, Publicity 118-9w
Hong Kong, Administrative costs 111w
Hong Kong, Conditions of employment 111w
Hong Kong, Official hospitality 111w
Hong Kong, Uniforms 110-1w
Local government constituencies 59w
Local government constituencies, Greater London 57-9w
Members' facilities, Newspaper press 109w
Official cars 134w
Official cars, Costs 134w
Parliamentary constituencies, Greater London 60w

BAOR
Antitank missiles 153w
Rapier missiles 153w

Barnes, Mr Harry
Debates etc.
Local government finance, England (14:05:92) 769-70
Treaty of Rome, Points of order (13:05:92) 620
Questions
Absent voting 61w
Absent voting, Northern Ireland 76w
Absent voting, Scotland 162w
Cattle, Salmonella 69-70w
Electoral register 735-6
Electoral register, Northern Ireland 75-6w
Electoral register, Scotland 162w
Local government reform, Derbyshire 616
Population 84-5w

Batiste, Mr Spencer
Questions
Local government finance, Central-local government relations 609

Battersea power station
127w

Battery hens
Animal welfare 179w

Battle, Mr John
Questions
Employment level 220-2w
Homelessness, Council housing 14w
Homelessness, Government grants to voluntary organisations 236w
Homelessness, Mortgage defaulters 13-4w
Housing, Mentally ill 236w
Maxwell companies, Pension funds 46w
Mortgage defaulters, Repossession orders 27w
Overseas aid 141-2w
Overseas aid, Expenditure 222w
Public expenditure 78w
Retirement age, EC countries 48-9w
Social Fund 46-8w
Social security benefits, Young people 45w
Social security claims, Women 45w
Young offenders, Suicide 20-1w
Youth training 39-40w

Bayley, Mr Hugh
Debates etc.
Maiden speech (07:05:92) 216-20
Queen's speech (07:05:92) 216-20
Questions
North Yorkshire Police, Manpower 730

Bayley, Mr Hugh—continued
Regional health authorities 485-6

BCCI
see Bank of Credit & Commerce International

Beaches
EC law 125w
Sea pollution 125w

Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Debates etc.
Queen's speech, Public expenditure (07:05:92) 170-8

Beggs, Mr Roy
Debates etc.
Queen's speech, Economic situation (13:05:92) 669
Questions
Hotels, Non-domestic rates 211w
Radiation hazards 604

Beith, Mr A J
Debates etc.
Queen's speech, Economic situation (13:05:92) 632, 633, 644-51
Questions
Members' facilities, Newspaper press 109w

Bell, Mr Stuart
Debates etc.
Queen's speech, Foreign policy (08:05:92) 308-11
Terrorism, Intelligence services (08:05:92) 302

Bellingham, Mr Henry
Debates etc.
Queen's speech, Environment local government & education (12:05:92) 511-2, 537
Questions
Anglian Water 602-3

Bendall, Mr Vivian
Questions
Taxi fares, Greater London 226-7w

Benefits Agency
see Social Security Benefits Agency

Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Debates etc.
Speaker's election (27:04:92) 5-8

Bennett, Mr Andrew F
Debates etc.
East Coast Main Line (Safety) Bill, Points of order (13:05:92) 620
Oral question time point of order. (11:05:92) 370
Questions
Commonwealth of Independent States, International assistance 368-9
Council housing, Stockport 609
Police custody, Prison population 116-8w, 200w
Top Salaries Review Body, Members' secretaries 39w

Benton, Anthony
18w
Complaints against police 33w

Berkeley power station
Decommissioning 170w

Bermingham, Mr Gerald
Questions
Animal Procedures Committee, Public appointments 206w
Environment protection 198w
Fraud, Criminal investigation 365
Schools, Cleaning services 175-6w
Science & technology policy 173w
Scientific Procedures Inspectorate, Manpower 206w
Shigella sonnei, Schools 167w
Technical education, Curriculum 175w

Betts, Mr Clive
Debates etc.
Local government finance, England (14:05:92) 769
Maiden speech (06:05:92) 83-6

Betts, Mr Clive—continued
Queen's speech (06:05:92) 83-6
Queen's speech, Environment local government & education (12:05:92) 512
Questions
Business statements 754-5

Biffen, Rt Hon John
Debates etc.
Speaker's election (27:04:92) 10-1

Bingham Inquiry
see Bank of Credit & Commerce International Inquiry

Bird scarers
237w

Blue Arrow
Dept of Trade inquiries 87w

Blunkett, Mr David
Debates etc.
Local government finance, England (14:05:92) 759-61
Queen's speech, Environment local government & education (12:05:92) 507-8, 511
Questions
Urban Regeneration Agency 12w, 90w, 128-9w

Bolingbroke Hospital
82w

Bombings
Lockerbie 21-2w, 90w, 177w, 180w

Bonamy Estate
Estate Action 233w

Boothroyd, Miss Betty, Speaker
Debates etc.
Speaker's election (27:04:92) 14-6

Bottomley, Mr Peter
Debates etc.
Building societies, Points of order (08:05:92) 307
Finance Bill, Ways & means res (14:05:92) 779, 784-90
Local government finance, England (14:05:92) 763
Terrorism, Intelligence services (08:05:92) 303-4
Questions
Convictions 201w
Families 82-3w
Road accidents, Casualties 72-4w
Tobacco, EC countries 84w

Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia, Secretary of State for Health
Questions
Back pain 484
Community care 486
Davies, Laura, Transplant surgery 490-2
Family doctors, Women 480-1
Hospital waiting lists 489-90
NHS reform 491
Nutrition labelling, Soft drinks 483
Regional health authorities 485-6
Smoking, Health hazards 483
Tobacco advertising 484, 491

Boundary Commission for England
60w
Parliamentary constituencies 60w

Boundary Commission for Wales
22w
Parliamentary constituencies 60w

Bovine spongiform encephalopathy
27-30w

Bowis, Mr John
Debates etc.
Queen's speech, Environment local government & education (12:05:92) 504, 572-4
Queen's speech, Foreign policy (08:05:92) 289

Bowis, Mr John—continued
Road safety (15:05:92) 861, 863, 897-901
Questions
Bolingbroke Hospital 82w
Burglary, Greater London 202w
Council house rents, Rent arrears 607
Curriculum, Educational assessment 66-7w
Education (Schools) Act 1992 66w
Postage stamps, World War II 143w
Vocational training, Tax allowances 115w

Boyce, Mr Jimmy
Debates etc.
Maiden speech (13:05:92) 693-5
Queen's speech, Economic situation (13:05:92) 693-5

Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Debates etc.
Queen's speech, Foreign policy (08:05:92) 311-4

Bradley, Mr Keith
Questions
Diabetes, Medical equipment 83w
Empty housing, Manchester 612

Brandreth, Mr Gyles
Debates etc.
Maiden speech (12:05:92) 529-31
Queen's speech, Environment local government & education (12:05:92) 529-31
Road safety (15:05:92) 904-6
Questions
Advisory Conciliation & Arbitration Service, Annual reports 6w
Italy, Parliament & government 744

Brazier, Mr Julian
Debates etc.
Queen's speech (06:05:92) 78
Questions
Acquittals, Criminal appeals 367
Measles, Vaccination 487

Breast feeding
148w

Bricks
134w

British Coal & British Rail (Transfer Proposals) Bill 1991/93
Debates etc.
1R (07:05:92) 161

British Coal Corporation
(07:05:92) 161, (11:05:92) 374-466
Consultants 231-2w
Privatisation 146w, 231-2w

British dependent territories
Leave 54w
Official cars 55w
Official residences 55w
Pay 55w

British Gas
136-7w

British International Helicopters
Maxwell, Robert 74-5w
Pension funds 96w

British Medical Association
80w

British Rail
(07:05:92) 161, (11:05:92) 374-466
External financing limits 7w
Privatisation 356

British Railways Board
(07:05:92) 161

British Railways (No 4) Bill 1991/92
Debates etc.
2R order read (13:05:92) 601, (14:05:92) 729

British residents abroad
Absent voting 20w, 116w, 206w
Electoral register 166w

British Technology Group
Privatisation 10w

Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Debates etc.
Speaker's election (27:04:92) 8-10, 23
Terrorism, Intelligence services (08:05:92) 300

Broomfield Hospital
Radioactive waste disposal 235w

Brown, Mr Nicholas
Debates etc.
Finance Bill, Ways & means res (14:05:92) 781-3, 795, 806-7

Brown Book
4w

Bruce, Mr Ian
Debates etc.
Queen's speech (06:05:92) 61
Questions
Business statements 749
EC internal trade, Civil servants' secondment 87-8w
Local government revenue, Community charge 36w
National Rivers Authority, Coastal protection 129w

Bruce, Mr Malcolm
Debates etc.
Finance Bill, Ways & means res (14:05:92) 774-5, 783, 794-9, 810

Budgen, Mr Nicholas
Debates etc.
Queen's speech, Economic situation (13:05:92) 637, 63[illegible]
Treaty of Rome, Points of order (13:05:92) 619

Budget March 1992
(14:05:92) 773-830

Budgeting
Family doctors 80w

Budgeting loans
46-8w

Building industry
129w
Unemployment 220w

Building repairs
Welsh Development Agency 120w

Building societies
Composite tax rate system 1-2w

Building Societies (Member States) Order 1992
Debates etc.
(14:05:92) 772

Bulgaria
Know-how Fund 369-70

Burden, Mr Richard
Questions
Prison accommodation 203w

Burglary
Greater London 202w

Burnley
City challenge 612

Burns, Mr Simon
Debates etc.
Income support, Mortgages (07:05:92) 266-9
Queen's speech, Economic situation (13:05:92) 625-6
Queen's speech, Public expenditure (07:05:92) 237, 240
Questions
Charitable donations, Tax allowances 1w
Chelmsford bypass, Telephones 74w
Company taxation, Insurance companies 164w

Burns, Mr Simon—continued
Composite tax rate system, Building societies 1-2w
Finance Bill 1991/92 2w
Parliamentary constituencies, Essex 60w
Recycling, Chelmsford 126w
Road tax, Handicapped 1w
Sports Council for England, Public appointments 173w
Squatting 61w

Burt, Mr Alistair, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Dept of Social Security
Debates etc.
Income support, Mortgages (07:05:92) 269-74
Questions
Child benefit, Social security benefits rates 100-2w
Child support, Widows 44-6w
Dept of Social Security, Ethnic monitoring 93w
Dept of Social Security, Higher civil servants 93-4w
Housing benefits, Government grants to local authorities 49w
Income support, Mortgages 43-4w, 94w
Income support, Water charges 140w
Income support, Young people 94w, 181w
Occupational pensions, Social security benefits rules 46w
Residential care, Income support 224-5w
Respite care 223-4w
Severe hardship provision, Social security recipients 93w
Social security appeal tribunals, Administrative delays 184w
Social security appeal tribunals, Kirkwall 184w
Social security benefits 93w
Social security benefits, Young people 45-6w, 94w
Social security claims, Women 45w

Bus services
Greater London 189w
London Tourist Board 189w
Monopolies 108w
Tredegar 363

Business motions
(08:05:92) 346

Business statements
747-56

Butcher, Mr John
Questions
Carers, Health surveys 213-4w
Civil disorder, Coventry 734-5
Respite care 223-4w

Butterfill, Mr John
Questions
British Technology Group, Privatisation 10w
Export Credits Guarantee Department, Supply Estimates 10w

Buxton
Museums & galleries 122w

Byers, Mr Stephen
Debates etc.
Maiden speech (12:05:92) 574-5
Queen's speech, Environment local government & education (12:05:92) 574-5

Cabinet committees
105w, 171w

Caborn, Mr Richard
Questions
Banks, Small businesses 232w
Midland Bank, Takeovers 232w

Calderdale Health Authority
Intensive care 214-7w

Cambodia
Armed forces pay 174w

Campbell, Mrs Anne
Debates etc.
Maiden speech (12:05:92) 515-8
Queen's speech, Environment local government & education (12:05:92) 515-8

Campbell, Mr Menzies
Questions
Contempt of court, Scotland 157w
Fatal accident inquiries, Scotland 92w
Juries, Scottish courts 161w
Prisoners, Self-mutilation 157-9w
Prisoners, Suicide 159-61w
Procurators Fiscal, Manpower 92-3w
Scottish courts, Manpower 162w
Sheriffs, Scotland 162w

Campbell-Savours, Mr D N
Debates etc.
Queen's speech (06:05:92) 69-70
Queen's speech, Economic situation (13:05:92) 632, 633
Queen's speech, Foreign policy (08:05:92) 314
Queen's speech, Privatisation (11:05:92) 377, 382
Queen's speech, Public expenditure (07:05:92) 164, 176, 235-6, 238-43, 246
Terrorism, Intelligence services (08:05:92) 303
Questions
Director of Public Prosecutions, Disclosure of information 33w

Canavan, Mr Dennis
Debates etc.
Queen's speech (06:05:92) 67, 69
Questions
Community charge, Administrative costs 128w

Cancer
North Wales 187w

Cancer hazards
Electric cables 82w

Capital gains tax
Tax yields 163w

Carbon dioxide
171w
Air pollution 234w
Air pollution control 104w, 132w, 139w, 237w
Electricity generation 170-1w

Carbon tax
743-4

Carbon tetrachloride
234w

Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill 1992/93
Debates etc.
1R & 2R* (suspended from preceding session) (08:05:92) 275
Order relating to Com (15:05:92) 911

Cardiff Bay Development Corporation
(08:05:92) 276

Cardiff Royal Infirmary
37w

Career structure
Midwives 148w
Nurses 148w

Carers
Health surveys 213-4w

Carlile, Mr Alex
Questions
Bricks 134w
House of Fraser, Company investigations 143-4w
Klebeck, Kurt, War crimes 109w, 118w
Local government reform, Wales 119w
Maxwell companies, Pensioners 140w
Mental patients, Wales 119w
Orimulsion, Air pollution 121w
Pension funds, Investment 140w

Carlile, Mr Alex—continued
War crimes, Channel Islands 118w

Carlisle, Mr Kenneth, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Dept of Transport
Debates etc.
Road construction, Construction materials (15:05:92) 915-8
Road safety (15:05:92) 849-57, 906-10
Severn bridge, Road tolls (06:05:92) 153-60
Questions
A21, Road works 227w
Chelmsford bypass, Telephones 74w
M1-M62 link 17w
M1-M62 link, Environment protection 17w
M1-M62 link, Greenbelt 17w
M1-M62 link, Road construction 72w, 227-9w
M1-M62 link, Road safety 16w
M4, Road safety 75w
M11, Motorway service areas 17-8w
M66, Road construction 73w
Motorcycles, Driving licences 18w
Motorways, Road construction 229-30w
Road accidents, Casualties 72-4w
Road finance, Essex 72w
Road humps 71w
Road traffic control, Local authority powers 106-7w
Roads, Manchester 17w
Stockport bypass, Road construction 72w

Carrington, Mr Matthew
Debates etc.
Queen's speech, Economic situation (13:05:92) 651-3, 657-8
Questions
British Gas 136-7w
Gas tariffs 744-5
Non-domestic rates, Hammersmith & Fulham 603

Cash, Mr William
Debates etc.
Queen's speech, Privatisation (11:05:92) 465
Questions
Business statements 748

Casualties
Road accidents 72-4w

Catalytic converters
Nitrous oxide 13w

Cattle
Salmonella 69-70w

Census of population
9w

Central banks
Economic & monetary union 113w

Central-local government relations
Local government finance 609

Cetaceans
123w, 197w

Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster
Departmental responsibilities 104-5w

Chancellor of the Exchequer
see Treasury

Channel Islands
War crimes 22w, 106w, 118w

Channel tunnel
Armed forces deployment 50w
Railway network 108w
Stratford Station 108w
Trains 108w

Channel Tunnel Rail Link Forum
London Channel Tunnel Group 108w

Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Questions
Local government reform 130w
Local government reform, Essex 616-7
Southend Health Authority 482

Chapeltown
Nursing homes (13:05:92) 72

Charitable donations
NHS finance 487-9
Tax allowances 1w

Charitable trusts
Sports facilities 608

Chelmsford
Recycling 126w

Chelmsford bypass
Telephones 74w

Chernobyl
Nuclear accidents 180w

Chief Adjudication Officer
see Office of the Chief Adjudication Officer

Child benefit
Social security benefits rates 100-2w

Child dependency additions
44-6w

Child health
Air pollution 150w

Child support
Widows 44-6w

Chisholm, Mr Malcolm
Debates etc.
Maiden speech (07:05:92) 209-10
Queen's speech (07:05:92) 209-10

Chlorofluorocarbons
234w
Asthma 84w

Christchurch
Pollution control 614

Citizen's Charter
64-6w, 104-5w, (11:05:92) 374-466, 496

City challenge
Burnley 612

City technology colleges
34-5w
Finance 34w

Civil disorder
Coventry 734-5

Civil proceedings
Disclosure of information 180w

Civil servants' secondment
EC internal trade 87-8w

Civil service agencies
Driving licences 106w
NHS pensions 167w
Northern Ireland 106w
Parliamentary questions 79w

Clapham, Mr Michael
Debates etc.
Maiden speech (06:05:92) 95-6
Queen's speech (06:05:92) 95-6

Clark, Dr David
Questions
Agriculture, Statistics 69w
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy 27-30w
Forestry Commission, Land acquisition 157w
Forestry Commission, Privatisation 162w

Clarke, Mr Eric
Debates etc.
Maiden speech (11:05:92) 429-31
Queen's speech, Privatisation (11:05:92) 429-31

Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth, Secretary of State for the Home Department
Debates etc.
Terrorism, Ministerial statements (08:05:92) 297-306

Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth—continued
Questions
Drug crimes 200w
Forensic Science Service, Performance indicators 207w
Police 739-40
Police, Criminal investigation 738-9
Police, Inspections 739
Terrorism, Police 60w
Treaty on European Union 206w
United Kingdom Passport Agency, Performance indicators 207-8w
War crimes 200w
Young offenders, Habitual offenders 738
Young offenders, Prisoners on remand 737-8

Clarke, Mr Tom
Questions
Community care 81w

Cleaning services
Schools 175-6w

Clergy
40w
Lord Chancellor's Dept 26w
Prime Minister 22w

Clifton-Brown, Mr Geoffrey
Debates etc.
Local government finance, England (14:05:92) 768-9

Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Debates etc.
Queen's speech, Foreign policy (08:05:92) 336-42
Questions
EC aid 371-2
Malawi, Overseas aid 140-1w
Nagorno Karabakh, Overseas aid 241w

Coal liquefaction
Point of Ayr 146w

Coastal areas
Environment protection 176w, 196-7w, 211-2w, 218w
Northern Ireland 211-2w
Scotland 176w
Sea pollution 139-40w
Wales 218w

Coastal erosion
South Wales 362

Coastal protection
National Rivers Authority 129w
Scotland 177w
Wales 121w

Codes of practice
Crown prosecutors 34w
Noise control 237w

Coffey, Ms Ann
Debates etc.
Maiden speech (12:05:92) 566-7
Queen's speech, Environment local government & education (12:05:92) 566-7

Cohen, Mr Harry
Questions
Rape, Marriage 202w
Royal College of Midwives, Upper Waiting Hall 147w

Colvin, Mr Michael
Debates etc.
Queen's speech (06:05:92) 76
Queen's speech, Economic situation (13:05:92) 626
Questions
Empty housing, Private sector housing 612

Commission of the European Communities
see European Commission

Committee of Selection
(11:05:92) 355

Common agricultural policy
EC reform 103w
Tobacco 123w

Common fisheries policy
Environment protection 226w

Commonwealth of Independent States
242w
Currencies 368-9
EC aid 55-6w
International assistance 368-9
Private sector 369

Community care
81w, 486
Elderly 86w

Community care grants
46-8w

Community charge
Administrative costs 128w
Local government revenue 36w

Community charge capping
(14:05:92) 758-72
Scotland 178w
Wales 188w

Community hospitals
South Trafford (13:05:92) 721-8

Compact discs
Prices 231w

Companies
Investors in People 39w

Company cars
Tax allowances 163w

Company investigations
House of Fraser 143-4w

Company liquidations
Olympia & York 365, 611

Company taxation
Insurance companies 164w

Complaints against police
Benton, Anthony 33w
Police Complaints Authority 204w

Composite tax rate system
Building societies 1-2w

Computer software
Patents 23w

Concessionary television licences
Pensioners 172-3w

Concrete
Pollution control 614

Conditions of employment
Hong Kong 111w

Connarty, Mr Michael
Debates etc.
Maiden speech (13:05:92) 673-6
Queen's speech, Economic situation (13:05:92) 673-6
Questions
Surgery, Death 481

Conservative Party
493, 495-6
Party conferences 743

Construction materials
Balance of trade 12w
Non-ionizing radiation 131w
Road construction (15:05:92) 912-8

Consultants
British Coal Corporation 231-2w

Contaminated land registers
198w

Contempt of court
Scotland 157w

Contracts for services
Stock Exchange 143w

Contracts of employment
Health service staff 83w

Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 1988
Questions
121-2w

Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species
196-7w
Enforcement 235w
Reptiles 235w

Convictions
201w

Conway, Mr Derek
Debates etc.
Queen's speech (06:05:92) 125-30

Cook, Mr Frank
Debates etc.
Queen's speech (06:05:92) 113-6

Cook, Mr Robin
Questions
NHS finance, Charitable donations 489
Tobacco advertising 484

Coombs, Mr Anthony
Debates etc.
Queen's speech, Economic situation (13:05:92) 676-8

Coombs, Mr Simon
Questions
Employment level, Wales 364-5

Cooperative societies
EC action 79w

Cope, Rt Hon Sir John, Paymaster-General
Questions
Economic policy, Environment protection 225w
Road tax, Handicapped 1w
Tax allowances, Charitable donations 1w
Tax harmonisation 78-9w
VAT, Aids for handicapped 163-4w
VAT, Sanitary protection 77w

Corbett, Mr Robin
Questions
Housing Defects Act 1984 127-8w
National Council of Victim Support, Finance 741

Corbyn, Mr Jeremy
Debates etc.
Queen's speech, Foreign policy (08:05:92) 283, 327
Terrorism, Intelligence services (08:05:92) 305
Questions
Business statements 753-4

Cormack, Mr Patrick
Questions
Business statements 752

Coroners
Hillsborough Stadium 33w

Corston, Ms Jean
Debates etc.
Maiden speech (13:05:92) 680-2
Queen's speech, Economic situation (13:05:92) 680-2

Couchman, Mr James
Debates etc.
Queen's speech, Economic situation (13:05:92) 655, 663-5
Questions
Landlord & tenant, Law reform 109w
NHS finance, Charitable donations 488-9

Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education
65w

Council house rents
Rent arrears 607
Scotland 41-3w

Council house sales
Leicester 608
Local government revenue 127w, 608

Council house waiting lists
Ards 168w

Council housing
Defective housing 606
Empty housing 611-3
Homelessness 14w, 609-10
Right of repair 127w
Stockport 609
Tameside 609

Council of Europe
Visas 241w

Council of Ministers
4-6w, 53w

Council of Mortgage Lenders
238-9w

Council tax
Retail price index 225w

Countryside
Environment protection 199w
Wales 186w

County Hall
127w

Cousins, Mr Jim
Questions
Defence Export Services Organisation, Audit 91-2w
Project Al Yamamah, Audit 91w
Project Al Yamamah, Defence Export Services Organisation 89w
Project Al Yamamah, Westland Helicopters 91w

Coventry
Civil disorder 734-5

Cox, Mr Tom
Debates etc.
Queen's speech, Foreign policy (08:05:92) 282, 328-31
Road safety (15:05:92) 870-4
Questions
Northern line 108w
Police, Ethnic minorities 204-5w
Radio broadcasting licences 172w

Cran, Mr James
Questions
Sewage, Water treatment 602

Crime prevention
Local authorities 733-5
Young offenders 203w

Criminal appeals
Acquittals 367

Criminal Injuries Compensation Board
59-60w

Criminal investigation
Fraud 365
Lockerbie 177w, 193-4w
Police 738-9

Criminal proceedings
Juries 367
Legal aid 27w

Crossrail Bill 1991/92
Debates etc.
2R order read (12:05:92) 473, (14:05:92) 729

Crown courts
Yorkshire & Humberside 26w

Crown immunity
Environmental Protection Act 1990 129w

Crown Prosecution Service
34w
Manpower 367

Crown prosecutors
Codes of practice 34w

Cryer, Mr Bob
Debates etc.
Finance Bill, Ways & means res (14:05:92) 773
Queen's speech, Environment local government & education (12:05:92) 514
Select Committee evidence, Points of order (06:05:92) 48
Sub judice, Points of order (12:05:92) 498
Questions
Business statements 752-3
Textile industry 496

CSCE Parliamentary Assembly
see European Security Conference Parliamentary Assembly

Cunningham, Mr Jim
Debates etc.
Maiden speech (12:05:92) 558-9
Queen's speech, Environment local government & education (12:05:92) 558-9
Questions
Eastern Europe, Overseas aid 32w

Cunningham, Dr John
Debates etc.
Queen's speech, Economic situation (13:05:92) 703-8
Questions
Business statements 747
"Home Office Electoral Registration Campaign" 210w

Currencies
Commonwealth of Independent States 368-9

Curriculum
Educational assessment 66-8w
Technical education 175w
Wales 67-8w

Currie, Mrs Edwina
Debates etc.
Local government finance, England (14:05:92) 770
Queen's speech, Economic situation (13:05:92) 623
Questions
Local government reform, Derbyshire 615-6
Measles, Death 86w

Curry, Mr David, Minister of State for Agriculture
Questions
Agricultural land, Radioactive fallout 180w
Common fisheries policy, Environment protection 226w
Fish conservation, EC law 70-1w
Fishery protection 124-5w
Fishing gear, Expenditure 226w
Forestry, Environment protection 179w
Marine animals, Nature conservation 179-80w
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food, Ethnic monitoring 124w
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food, Higher civil servants 123-4w, 179w
Tobacco, Common agricultural policy 123w
Whales, Nature conservation 123w

Custodial treatment
Young offenders 204w

Cyprus
Peace keeping operations 191w

Dacorum
Family doctors 80w

Dafis, Mr Cynog
Debates etc.
Maiden speech (11:05:92) 425-7
Queen's speech, Privatisation (11:05:92) 425-7
Questions
Alternative energy, Electricity generation 169w
Antarctic, Environment protection 239w

Dafis, Mr Cynog*—*continued
Areas of outstanding natural beauty, Wales 218-9w
Carbon dioxide, Air pollution 234w
Carbon dioxide, Air pollution control 104w
Cetaceans 197w
Common fisheries policy, Environment protection 226w
Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species, Enforcement 235w
Developing countries, Debts 223w
Developing countries, Overseas aid 222w
Energy conservation, Lighting 132w
Environment protection, Coastal areas 197w
Environment protection, Economic policy 225w
Fishing gear, Expenditure 226w
Hazardous wastes, Imports 234w
Incinerators 233-4w
Marine animals, Nature conservation 179-80w
Non-fossil fuel obligation 230w
Overseas aid, Pollution control 221-2w
Ozone layer, Air pollution control 234w
Tax allowances, Company cars 163w
Unemployment, Pembrokeshire 38w
Waste disposal, Statistics 233w
Whales 171w

Dalai Lama
209w

Dalyell, Mr Tam
Debates etc.
Queen's speech (06:05:92) 63, 72-3
Speaker's election (27:04:92) 4-5
Questions
Asbestosis, Damages 41w
Civil proceedings, Disclosure of information 180w
Computer software, Patents 23w
Extradition 33w
Lockerbie, Bombings 21-2w, 90w, 177w, 180w
Myalgic encephalomyelitis, Medical research 173w
Oxford Forestry Institute, International conferences 69w
Public interest, Evidence 177w
Terrorism, Police 60w

Damages
Asbestosis 41w

Darling, Mr Alistair
Questions
Electoral register 736-7

Davies, Rt Hon Denzil
Questions
Local government reform, Wales 356-7

Davies, Laura
Transplant surgery 488, 490-2

Davies, Mr Quentin
Questions
Economic situation 495-6
Preventive medicine, Family doctors 486-7

Davies, Mr Ron
Questions
Local government reform, Wales 35w, 358-9
Tobacco, Common agricultural policy 123w
Young offenders, Crime prevention 203w
Zoos 137w

Day, Mr Stephen
Questions
Motorcycles, Driving licences 18w

Death
Measles 86w
Surgery 481

Debts
Developing countries 32w, 223w

Debts written off
Developing countries 222w

Decommissioning
Berkeley power station 170w
Nuclear submarines 240w

Defective housing
Council housing 606
Housing investment programmes 605
Liverpool 605-6

Defence contracts
Audit 91w

Defence equipment
174-5w

Defence expenditure
Disclosure of information 153w, 155w

Defence Export Services Organisation
240w
Audit 91-2w
Indonesia 174w
Project Al Yamamah 89w

Defence procurement
Guided weapons 154w
Navy 155w

Defence research
153w

Defence Research Agency
153w

Defence review
154w
Military balance 154w

Denham, Mr John
Questions
Developing countries, Debts written off 222w

Dentists
Pay 85w, 149-50w

Departmental responsibilities
Bankruptcy (Scotland) Act 1985 2w
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster 104-5w
Dept of National Heritage 105w

Dept for Education
65-6w
Ethnic monitoring 61w
Higher civil servants 62w

Dept of Employment
Ethnic monitoring 79w
Higher civil servants 80w

Dept of Health
209w
Ethnic monitoring 84w
Higher civil servants 83-4w

Dept of National Heritage
Departmental responsibilities 105w

Dept of Social Security
Ethnic monitoring 93w
Higher civil servants 93-4w

Dept of Social Security local offices
Rawtenstall 220w

Dept of the Environment
233w
Ethnic monitoring 195w
Higher civil servants 194-5w

Dept of Trade & Industry
Ethnic monitoring 168-9w
Higher civil servants 143w, 169w

Dept of Trade inquiries
Blue Arrow 87w
Guinness 87w

Dept of Transport
74-5w
Ethnic monitoring 16w
Higher civil servants 16w

Derbyshire
Local government reform 615-6

Developing countries
Debts 32w, 223w
Debts written off 222w
Environment protection 142w
Overseas aid 222w

Development areas
Dyfed 186w

Devlin, Mr Tim
Debates etc.
Conservative Party, Points of order (12:05:92) 498
Queen's speech (06:05:92) 73-4
Speaker's election (27:04:92) 26
Questions
Intensive care 481-2
Midland Bank, Takeovers 232w
RNSD Eaglescliffe 49w
Sports facilities, Charitable trusts 608

Devolution
495

Devonport Dockyard
Fires 50-1w
Manpower 153w

Dewar, Mr Donald
Debates etc.
Queen's speech, Privatisation (11:05:92) 380, 455-61, 464
Questions
Rents to mortgages scheme, Scotland 156w, 225-6w

Dewsbury
Planning permission 12w

Diabetes
Medical equipment 83w
Prescriptions 213w

Dickens, Mr Geoffrey
Debates etc.
Queen's speech, Privatisation (11:05:92) 375
Questions
NHS finance, Wales 360
Prison education services 732

Dicks, Mr Terry
Debates etc.
Local government finance, England (14:05:92) 765

Diplomatic relations
110w

Diplomatic service
Uniforms 110w

Dir85/337/EEC
120w, 133-4w, 178-9w

Dir91/440/EEC
107-8w

Director General of Fair Trading
see Office of Fair Trading

Director General of Gas Supply
see Office of Gas Supply

Director General of Telecommunications
see Office of Telecommunications

Director of Public Prosecutions
Disclosure of information 33w

Disability appeal tribunals
Manpower 95w
Pay 95w
Social security benefits rules 95-7w

"Disability Handbook"
HIV infection 96w

Disability living allowance
97-9w
Home visits 98w
Social Security Benefits Agency 97w
Social security claims 181-3w
Social security recipients 99w

Disability working allowance
97-9w
Social security claims 181-2w

Disposable syringes
213w

District health authorities
Finance 482

Dixon, Mr Don
Debates etc.
Queen's speech, Public expenditure (07:05:92) 233

Dobson, Mr Frank
Debates etc.
Padiham power station, Orimulsion (14:05:92) 835, 836, 848
Questions
British Coal Corporation, Privatisation 231-2w

Doctors' list of patients
81w

Dogs
South Hams District Council 210-1w

Domestic wastes
Recycling 186-7w, 198-9w

Donohoe, Mr Brian H
Debates etc.
Maiden speech (13:05:92) 678-80
Queen's speech, Economic situation (13:05:92) 678-80

Dorrell, Mr Stephen, Financial Secretary to the Treasury
Debates etc.
Finance Bill, Ways & means res (14:05:92) 773-81, 795, 796, 797, 807-11
Finance Bill, 1R (14:05:92) 831
Queen's speech, Economic situation (13:05:92) 672
Queen's speech, Privatisation (11:05:92) 390
Questions
Company taxation, Insurance companies 164w
Composite tax rate system, Building societies 1-2w
Finance Bill 1991/92 2w
Income tax on foreign incomes, Merchant seamen 77w
Tax allowances, Company cars 163w
Tax allowances, Vocational training 115w
Taxation, Multinational companies 164-5w

Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Scottish Office
Questions
Absent voting, Scotland 162w
Asbestosis, Damages 41w
Contempt of court, Scotland 157w
Council house rents, Scotland 41-3w
Fatal accident inquiries, Scotland 92w
Further education, Scotland 92w
Juries, Scottish courts 161w
Lockerbie, Bombings 177w
M80, Road construction 156-7w
Prisoners, Self-mutilation 157-9w
Prisoners, Suicide 159-61w
Procurators Fiscal, Manpower 92-3w
Public interest, Evidence 177w
Scottish courts, Manpower 162w
Sheriffs, Scotland 162w

Dover, Mr Den
Questions
Local government reform, Wales 357
Northern line 72w

Dover Harbour Police
Police Complaints Authority 204w

Dredging
362

Driving licences
Civil service agencies 106w
Motorcycles 18w

Drug crimes
200w

Duncan-Smith, Mr Iain
Questions
Petroleum production 4w

Dunn, Mr Bob
Debates etc.
Queen's speech, Public expenditure (07:05:92) 230, 232, 245-8
Questions
EC Foreign Affairs Council 242w
Regional health authorities 486
Taxation, Multinational companies 164-5w
Trespass, Transient people 129w, 200w

Dunnachie, Mr Jimmy
Questions
Armed forces casualties, Accidents 494

Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Debates etc.
Queen's speech, Privatisation (11:05:92) 378, 398-401
Speaker's election (27:04:92) 11-3

Durant, Sir Anthony
Questions
EC Transport Council 3-4w

Dyfed
Development areas 186w

Eagle, Ms Angela
Debates etc.
Maiden speech (11:05:92) 453-5
Queen's speech, Privatisation (11:05:92) 453-5

East Coast Main Line (Safety) Bill 1991/92
Debates etc.
2R order read (13:05:92) 601, (14:05:92) 729

Eastern Europe
Overseas aid 32w

Eastham, Mr Ken
Questions
Nutrition labelling, Soft drinks 483

EC action
Cooperative societies 79w
Tobacco advertising 167w

EC Agriculture Council
4-6w

EC aid
371-2
Commonwealth of Independent States 55-6w

EC Commission
see European Commission

EC Committee of the Regions
21w

EC countries
Retirement age 48-9w

EC Culture Council
4-6w

EC Development Council
4-6w, 197w

EC Draft 6748/91
167w

EC Energy Council
4-6w

EC Environment Council
4-6w, 197w

EC Finance Council
4-6w

EC Fisheries Council
70-1w

EC Foreign Affairs Council
4-6w, 190w, 242w

EC Health Council
4-6w

EC integration
493-5

EC Internal Market Council
4-6w

EC internal trade
Civil servants' secondment 87-8w
Frontiers 741-2

EC Labour & Social Affairs Council
151w

EC law
Beaches 125w
Environment protection 133w
Fish conservation 70-1w
Genetically modified organisms 134w
Railway transport 107w
Treaty on European Union 165w

EC reform
Common agricultural policy 103w

EC Transport Council
3-4w

Ecolabelling
Publicity 130-1w

Economic & monetary union
Central banks 113w
Treaty on European Union 112-4w

Economic Commission for Europe
see UN Economic Commission for Europe

Economic policy
Environment protection 225w

Economic recession
Neath 36w

Economic situation
495-6
Queen's speech (13:05:92) 621-719

Education
Mid Glamorgan (12:05:92) 593-600
Queen's speech (12:05:92) 500-92
Wales 36w

Education (National Curriculum) (Foundation Subjects at Key Stage 4) Order 1992
Debates etc.
(14:05:92) 772

Education (No 2) Act 1986
Questions
64w

Education (Schools) Act 1992
Questions
66w

Educational assessment
Curriculum 66-8w
Primary education 34w

Educational qualifications
Armed forces 155w

Educational records
Schools 65w

EEC
see European Economic Community

EFTA
see European Free Trade Association

Eggar, Mr Tim, Minister for Energy
Questions
Alternative energy 230w
Alternative energy, Electricity generation 169w
Alternative energy, Northern Ireland 230w
Alternative energy, Research finance 169w
Berkeley power station, Decommissioning 170w
British Coal Corporation, Privatisation 146w, 231-2w
Carbon dioxide 171w
Carbon dioxide, Electricity generation 170-1w

Eggar, Mr Tim—continued
Coal liquefaction, Point of Ayr 146w
Dept of Trade & Industry, Ethnic monitoring 168-9w
Dept of Trade & Industry, Higher civil servants 143w, 169w
Non-fossil fuel obligation 230w
Nuclear power 146w
Nuclear power, Research 170w
Nuclear power, Russia 170w
Petroleum production 4w
Radioactivity, Information 170w
Renewable Energy Advisory Group 139w
Sizewell C, Construction 145w
United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority, Radiation hazards 23w

Elderly
Community care 86w
Residential care 217w

Election administration
Absent voting 735

Elections
Kurdistan 242w

Electoral register
118w, 735-7
British residents abroad 166w
Greater Manchester 166w
Northern Ireland 75-6w
Publicity 118-9w
Scotland 162w

Electric cables
Cancer hazards 82w

Electricity generation
Alternative energy 169w
Carbon dioxide 170-1w

Elletson, Mr Harold
Questions
NHS pensions, Civil service agencies 167w

Emergency planning
Nuclear accidents 185w

Employers' statutory sick pay scheme
Social security benefits rates 47-8w

Employment level
220-2w
Wales 364-5

Employment opportunities
Gwynedd 35w
Ynys Mon 362-3

Empty housing
Council housing 611-3
Homelessness 612-3
Manchester 612
Private sector housing 612
Southampton 612-3

Energy conservation
137w
Insulation 133w
Lighting 132w

Energy Saving Trust
136-7w

Energy Technology Support Unit
169w

Enright, Mr Derek
Questions
NHS finance, Charitable donations 487-8

Enterprise allowance scheme
Training & enterprise councils 221w

Environment
Meteorological satellites 145w
Ministerial duties 171w

Environment protection
125w, 198w, 492-3, 615
Antarctic 239w
Coastal areas 176w, 196-7w, 211-2w, 218w
Common fisheries policy 226w

Environment protection—continued
Countryside 199w
Developing countries 142w
EC law 133w
Economic policy 225w
Equipment 231w
Forestry 179w
HM Inspectorate of Pollution 613-4
Home Grown Timber Advisory Committee 178w
M1-M62 link 17w
Welsh Office 37-8w

Environment Week
13w
Wales 38w

Environmental impact assessment
130w, 133-4w, 227w, 229-30w
Scotland 178-9w
Wales 120w

Environmental policy
Queen's speech (12:05:92) 500-92

Environmental Protection Act 1990
Questions
138w, 198w
Crown immunity 129w

Essex
Local government reform 616-7
Parliamentary constituencies 60w
Road finance 72w

Estate Action
Bonamy Estate 233w
Expenditure 126w

Estuaries
Nature conservation 120w, 138w, 176w
Scotland 176w
Wales 120w

Etherington, Mr Bill
Debates etc.
Maiden speech (11:05:92) 408-11
Queen's speech, Privatisation (11:05:92) 408-11
Questions
Overseas aid, Rain forests 32w

Ethnic minorities
Higher civil servants 16w, 62w, 76-7w, 80w, 83-4w, 93-4w, 123-4w, 143w, 168-9w, 179w, 185w, 194-5w, 211w
Police 204-5w

Ethnic monitoring
Armed forces 175w
Dept for Education 61w
Dept of Employment 79w
Dept of Health 84w
Dept of Social Security 93w
Dept of the Environment 195w
Dept of Trade & Industry 168-9w
Dept of Transport 16w
Higher civil servants 239-40w
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 124w
Ministry of Defence 239w
Northern Ireland Office 211w
Treasury 77w
Welsh Office 184-5w

European Assembly
see European Parliament

European Commission
89w
Treaty on European Union 26w

European Communities (Amendment) Bill 1992/93
Debates etc.
1R (07:05:92) 162

European Economic Area
European Free Trade Association 88w

European Economic Community
(08:05:92) 276-96, 307-46

European Free Trade Association
European Economic Area 88w

European Legislation Select Committee
167w

European Movement
UK contributions 53w

European Parliament
24w
Treaty on European Union 53w

European Parliament members
Gibraltar 24w

European Security Conference Parliamentary Assembly
105w

European Space Agency
145w

Evans, Mr David
Debates etc.
Queen's speech, Foreign policy (08:05:92) 331-5
Questions
Conservative Party, Party conferences 743

Evans, Mr John
Questions
Recycling, Local government functions 195w
Recycling, National parks 196w

Evans, Mr Jonathan
Debates etc.
Maiden speech (12:05:92) 575-8
Queen's speech, Environment local government & education (12:05:92) 575-8
Questions
Foreign investment in UK, Wales 363-4

Evans, Mr Nigel
Questions
Orimulsion, Air pollution 614-5

Evans, Mr Roger
Debates etc.
Severn bridge, Road tolls (06:05:92) 155-6
Questions
Local government reform 39w
Polychlorinated biphenyl, Pontypool 219w

Evennett, Mr David
Questions
Accident & emergency departments, Greater London 480
Council housing, Right of repair 127w

Evidence
Public interest 177w
Scottish courts 177w

Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Debates etc.
Armed forces casualties, Points of order (12:05:92) 498
Queen's speech (06:05:92) 67

Exchange rates
West Germany 113w

Exhaust emissions
Pollution monitoring 237-8w

Export Credits Guarantee Department
89w
Supply Estimates 9-10w

Export promotion
Arms trade 240w

Exservicemen
Ministerial duties 21w

External financing limits
British Rail 7w

Extractive industries
Planning permission 195w

Extradition
33w
Germany 118w

FA Cup Final
Touting 61w

Falkirk Royal Infirmary
481

Families
82-3w

Family doctors
Budgeting 80w
Dacorum 80w
Finance 484-5
Preventive medicine 486-7
Women 480-1

Family planning
UN Conference on Environment & Development 68-9w

Fatal accident inquiries
Scotland 92w

Federation of Master Builders
127w

Feltham Young Offenders Institution
Prison education services 731-2

Ferro Alloys & Metals
Air pollution control 131w

Field, Mr Barry
Debates etc.
Queen's speech, Privatisation (11:05:92) 448-50
Questions
Agricultural workers, Pay 3w
Census of population 9w
Interception of Communications Commissioner, Annual reports 172w
Local government reform, Isle of Wight 617
Vietnamese refugees 111-2w

Field, Mr Frank
Debates etc.
Queen's speech, Public expenditure (07:05:92) 183-6, 211, 260
Questions
Absent voting, British residents abroad 20w
Business statements 748
Clergy 40w
Clergy, Lord Chancellor's Dept 26w
Clergy, Prime Minister 22w
Iran, Bahai sect 193w

Finance Bill 1992/93
Debates etc.
Ways & means res (14:05:92) 773-830
1R (14:05:92) 831
Money res* (14:05:92) 831
Questions
2w

Fires
Devonport Dockyard 50-1w
HMS Turbulent 50-1w

Fish conservation
EC law 70-1w

Fishery protection
124-5w

Fishing gear
Expenditure 226w

Fishing vessels
Shipping registration 17w, 189w

Flats
Public sector housing sales 606
Rents to mortgages scheme 156w

Flats over shops initiative
Government grants to local authorities 7-8w

Flynn, Mr Paul
Debates etc.
Queen's speech, Economic situation (13:05:92) 630, 637
Severn bridge, Road tolls (06:05:92) 151-3
Questions
Arms trade, Iraq 89w

Flynn, Mr Paul—continued
Berkeley power station, Decommissioning 170w
Child benefit, Social security benefits rates 100-2w
Child support, Widows 44-6w
Commonwealth of Independent States, EC aid 55-6w
Contaminated land registers 198w
Crime prevention, Local authorities 733-4
Disability appeal tribunals, Manpower 95w
Disability appeal tribunals, Social security benefits rules 95-7w
"Disability Handbook", HIV infection 96w
Disability living allowance, Home visits 98w
Disability living allowance, Social security claims 181-3w
Disability living allowance, Social security recipients 99w
Disability working allowance, Social security claims 181-2w
EC Foreign Affairs Council 190w
Employers' statutory sick pay scheme, Social security benefits rates 47-8w
Energy conservation 137w
European Free Trade Association, European Economic Area 88w
Government buildings, Security vetting 193w
Handicap benefits, Departmental forms 98-9w
Handicap benefits, Expenditure 97w
Handicap benefits, Publicity 97w, 99w
Handicap benefits, Research 97-8w
Income support, Mortgages 43-4w, 94w
Income support, Young people 181w
Independent Living Fund 183-4w
INMOS, Government grants 187w
Intelligence services, Accountability 103w
M4, Road safety 75w
Microelectronics industry, Manpower 361
Nuclear power, Research 170w
Nuclear power, Russia 170w
Nuclear weapons tests 90w
Occupational pensions, Social security benefits rules 46w
Parliamentary questions, Civil service agencies 79w
Pollutants, Industrial production 199-200w
Prescriptions, Costs 31w
Radioactivity, Information 170w
Social Fund 48w
Social security appeal tribunals, Pay 95w
Social security benefits, Young people 45-6w
Tobacco advertising 491
Tobacco advertising, EC action 167w
UN Conference on Environment & Development, Family planning 68-9w
UN Economic Commission for Europe 191w
Unemployment benefits, Social security benefits disqualification 40w
United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority, Radiation hazards 23w
World Commission on Culture & Development 191w

Food hygiene
Meat 124w

Food labelling
Meat 124w

Football
(08:05:92) 347-54
Touting 21w

Foreign & Commonwealth Office
Oral questions 369

Foreign investment in UK
Wales 363-4

Foreign policy
Iran 192-3w
Queen's speech (08:05:92) 276-96, 307-46

Foreign trade
USA 88w

Forensic Science Service
Performance indicators 207w

Forestry
(11:05:92) 467-72
Environment protection 179w
Wales 37-8w

Forestry Authority
37-8w

Forestry Commission
Land acquisition 157w
Privatisation 162w

Forestry Enterprise
37-8w

Forman, Mr Nigel, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education
Questions
Access funds 63w
Dept for Education, Ethnic monitoring 61w
Dept for Education, Higher civil servants 62w
National Union of Students 62-3w

Forsyth, Mr Michael, Minister of State for Employment
Questions
Dept of Social Security local offices, Rawtenstall 220w
Employment level 220-2w
Training & enterprise councils, Enterprise allowance scheme 221w

Forsythe, Mr Clifford
Questions
Coastal areas, Environment protection 176w, 196w, 211-2w, 218w

Forth, Mr Eric, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education
Questions
City technology colleges 34-5w
City technology colleges, Finance 34w
Educational assessment, Primary education 34w
Educational records, Schools 65w
Grant maintained schools 63-4w
Non-teaching staff, Manpower 65-6w
School discipline 65w
School discipline, Police 64w
Schools, Cleaning services 175-6w
Schools, Intimidation 62w
Teacher training, Teaching methods 65w
Teachers, Manpower 66w
Technical education, Curriculum 175w
Truancy 64-5w

Foster, Mr Don
Debates etc.
Maiden speech (12:05:92) 521-3
Queen's speech, Environment local government & education (12:05:92) 521-3

Foulkes, Mr George
Questions
Bangladesh, Human rights 25-6w

Fox, Dr Liam
Debates etc.
Maiden speech (12:05:92) 540-2
Queen's speech, Environment local government & education (12:05:92) 540-2

Franchising
Seekers Estate Agencies 168w

Fraser, Mr John
Debates etc.
Local government finance, England (14:05:92) 766

Fraud
Criminal investigation 365

Freeman, Mr Roger, Minister for Public Transport
Debates etc.
Queen's speech, Privatisation (11:05:92) 392, 393

Freeman, Mr Roger—continued
Questions
Channel tunnel, Railway network 108w
Channel tunnel, Stratford Station 108w
Channel tunnel, Trains 108w
Channel Tunnel Rail Link Forum, London Channel Tunnel Group 108w
"Local Bus Deregulation & the Consumer" 18w
London Tilbury & Southend Line, Capital investment 107w
M1-M62 link, Road construction 227w
Railway transport, EC law 107w
Transport & Works Act 1992, Planning permission 73-4w

French, Mr Douglas
Debates etc.
Local government finance, England (14:05:92) 768
Questions
Flats, Public sector housing sales 606
Frontiers, EC internal trade 741-2

Frontiers
EC internal trade 741-2

Fry, Mr Peter
Debates etc.
Queen's speech, Public expenditure (07:05:92) 186-90

Further & Higher Education Act 1992
Questions
Wales 35-6w

Further education
Scotland 92w
Student grants 92w

Further Education Funding Council for Wales
35-6w

Gale, Mr Roger
Questions
Assaults on police, Offensive weapons 733

Gapes, Mr Mike
Debates etc.
Maiden speech (08:05:92) 322-5
Queen's speech, Foreign policy (08:05:92) 322-5

Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan, Minister of State, Foreign & Commonwealth Office
Debates etc.
Queen's speech, Foreign policy (08:05:92) 310, 316, 317-8, 342-6
Questions
Council of Ministers 4-6w
Cyprus, Peace keeping operations 191w
EC Foreign Affairs Council 190w
Gibraltar, European Parliament members 24w
Treaty of Rome 25w
Treaty on European Union 24-5w, 111w, 190w
Treaty on European Union, European Commission 26w
Treaty on European Union, Treaty of Rome 25w

Garrett, Mr John
Debates etc.
Queen's speech, Economic situation (13:05:92) 636-7

Gas tariffs
744-5

GATT
23w

Genetically modified organisms
EC law 134w

George, Mr Bruce
Debates etc.
Queen's speech, Economic situation (13:05:92) 701-3

Germany
Extradition 118w
Interest rates 113-4w

Gerrard, Mr Neil
Debates etc.
Maiden speech (12:05:92) 554-6
Queen's speech, Environment local government & education (12:05:92) 554-6

Gibraltar
European Parliament members 24w

Gift aid
1w

Gill, Mr Christopher
Debates etc.
Treaty of Rome, Points of order (13:05:92) 619-20
Questions
EC integration 494-5
Police civilians 201w

Godman, Dr Norman A
Debates etc.
EC integration, Points of order (12:05:92) 497

Golding, Mrs Llin
Debates etc.
Finance Bill, Ways & means res (14:05:92) 784

Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair, Minister of State, Foreign & Commonwealth Office
Questions
British dependent territories, Leave 54w
British dependent territories, Official cars 55w
British dependent territories, Official residences 55w
British dependent territories, Pay 55w
Diplomatic relations 110w
Diplomatic service, Uniforms 110w
Hong Kong, Administrative costs 111w
Hong Kong, Conditions of employment 111w
Hong Kong, Official hospitality 111w
Hong Kong, Uniforms 110-1w
Vietnamese refugees 111-2w

Gordon, Ms Mildred
Debates etc.
Queen's speech, Environment local government & education (12:05:92) 508, 510

Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Debates etc.
Queen's speech, Environment local government & education (12:05:92) 505
Questions
Aerosols, Air pollution 604-5

Gould, Mr Bryan
Debates etc.
Queen's speech, Environment local government & education (12:05:92) 500-6, 509-10
Questions
Homelessness, Council housing 609-10
Olympia & York, Company liquidations 611

Government buildings
Security vetting 193w
Vauxhall 193w

Government departments
Higher civil servants 239w

Government grants to local authorities
Flats over shops initiative 7-8w
Housing benefits 49w

Government grants to voluntary organisations
Homelessness 236w

Grant, Sir Anthony
Questions
Business statements 754
Terrorism 493

Grant, Mr Bernie
Questions
North Middlesex Hospital 480

Grant maintained schools
63-4w

Grants for education support & training
64-5w

Greater London
Accident & emergency departments 480
Burglary 202w
Bus services 189w
Local government constituencies 57-9w
Parliamentary constituencies 60w
Road traffic 201w
School crossing patrols 205w
Taxi fares 226-7w

Greater Manchester
Electoral register 166w
Police custody 116-8w, 200w

Greater Manchester Police Authority
19-20w

Greenbelt
M1-M62 link 17w

Greenhouse effect
Overseas aid 222w

Greenway, Mr Harry
Debates etc.
Queen's speech, Environment local government & education (12:05:92) 547, 568-70
Questions
Business statements 754
NHS finance 85w
Official engagements 90w, 172w
Overseas aid, Expenditure 141w
Rents to mortgages scheme 56w, 607
School crossing patrols, Greater London 205w
Visas, Poland 203w

Greenway, Mr John
Questions
Drug crimes 200w
North Yorkshire Police 730

Griffiths, Mr Nigel
Debates etc.
Prison escapes, Points of order (12:05:92) 498

Griffiths, Mr Win
Questions
Agricultural land, Radioactive fallout 180w
Alternative energy, Research finance 169w
Carbon dioxide, Air pollution control 132w, 139w
Carbon dioxide, Electricity generation 170-1w
Child health, Air pollution 150w
Coastal areas, Sea pollution 139-40w
Coastal erosion, South Wales 362
Coastal protection, Scotland 177w
Coastal protection, Wales 121w
Countryside, Environment protection 199w
Countryside, Wales 186w
Energy conservation, Insulation 133w
Environment protection, EC law 133w
Environmental impact assessment 133-4w
Environmental impact assessment, Scotland 178-9w
Environmental impact assessment, Wales 120w
Estuaries, Nature conservation 120w, 138w, 176w
Hedges & ditches, Nature conservation 198w
Hydrofluorochlorocarbons, Air pollution control 605
Meat, Food labelling 124w
Radioactive waste disposal 139w
Recycling, Domestic wastes 186-7w, 198-9w
Sheep, Radioactivity 187-8w
Village halls, Government grants 120w
Welsh Development Agency, Building repairs 120w
Welsh language, Student loans 186w

Grimsby
Local government revenue 11-3w

Grocott, Mr Bruce
Debates etc.
Conservative Party, Points of order (12:05:92) 499
Queen's speech (06:05:92) 71
Queen's speech, Privatisation (11:05:92) 392
Queen's speech, Public expenditure (07:05:92) 166
Questions
British dependent territories, Leave 54w
British dependent territories, Official cars 55w
British dependent territories, Official residences 55w
British dependent territories, Pay 55w

Grylls, Sir Michael
Debates etc.
Finance Bill, Ways & means res (14:05:92) 792-4, 798
Queen's speech, Economic situation (13:05:92) 625
Questions
Capital gains tax, Tax yields 163w

Guided weapons
Defence procurement 154w

Guinness
Dept of Trade inquiries 87w

Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn, Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food
Questions
Agricultural workers, Pay 3w
Agriculture, Statistics 69w
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy 27-30w
Meat, Food hygiene 124w
Meat, Refrigeration 30w

Gunnell, Mr John
Questions
Urban Regeneration Agency, Accountability 618

Gwynedd
Employment opportunities 35w

Habitual offenders
Young offenders 738

Hague, Mr William
Questions
NHS administration 746

Hain, Mr Peter
Debates etc.
Queen's speech, Economic situation (13:05:92) 630
Questions
Business statements 748-9
Economic recession, Neath 36w

Hall, Mr Mike
Debates etc.
Maiden speech (06:05:92) 122-5
Queen's speech (06:05:92) 122-5

Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie, Minister of State for the Armed Forces
Questions
Armed forces, Educational qualifications 155w
Armed forces, Ethnic monitoring 175w
Armed forces deployment, Channel tunnel 50w
Armed forces deployment, Yugoslavia 174w
Armed forces pay, Yugoslavia 174w
Armed forces recruitment, Disclosure of information 155w
Armed forces training, Thailand 153w
BAOR, Antitank missiles 153w
BAOR, Rapier missiles 153w
Defence expenditure, Disclosure of information 155w
Defence review 154w
Defence review, Military balance 154w
Helicopters, Air force 152w
Helicopters, Army 152w
HMS Turbulent, Fires 50-1w

Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie—continued
Military aircraft 152w
Military ceremonies, Costs 174w
NATO 175w
Nuclear submarines, Radiation hazards 51-2w
Nuclear submarines, Russia 50w
Nuclear weapons deployment, Warships 152w
RNSD Eaglescliffe 49w

Hamilton, Mr Neil, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Corporate Affairs
Questions
Bank of Credit & Commerce International 23w
Bank of Credit & Commerce International, Compensation 23w
Blue Arrow, Dept of Trade inquiries 87w
Bus services, Monopolies 108w
Compact discs, Prices 231w
House of Fraser, Company investigations 143-4w
Midland Bank, Takeovers 89-90w, 232w
Public houses, Landlord & tenant 87w
Stock Exchange, Contracts for services 143w
United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority, Monopolies & Mergers Commission 144-5w

Hammersmith & Fulham
Non-domestic rates 603

Handicap benefits
Departmental forms 98-9w
Expenditure 97w
Publicity 97w, 99w
Research 97-8w
Social security claims 100w

Handicapped
Road tax 1w

Handicapped pupils
Northern Ireland 212-3w
Teachers 212w

Hanley, Mr Jeremy, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Northern Ireland Office
Questions
Absent voting, Northern Ireland 76w
Electoral register, Northern Ireland 75-6w
Handicapped pupils, Northern Ireland 212-3w
Handicapped pupils, Teachers 212w
Local government constituencies, Northern Ireland 106w
Special education, Teachers 212w

Hannam, Sir John
Questions
Council of Ministers 4-6w
Polling stations, Access to buildings 737
Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain, Upper Waiting Hall 167w

Hanson, Mr David
Debates etc.
Maiden speech (06:05:92) 137-41
Queen's speech (06:05:92) 137-41
Queen's speech, Environment local government & education (12:05:92) 569
Questions
Coal liquefaction, Point of Ayr 146w

Hargreaves, Mr Andrew
Questions
Carbon dioxide, Air pollution control 237w
Family doctors, Women 480-1
Urban Regeneration Agency 125w

Haringey
Accident & emergency departments 480

Harman, Ms Harriet
Questions
Intensive care 482
Transport & Works Act 1992, Planning permission 73-4w

Harris, Mr David
Debates etc.
Speaker's election (27:04:92) 2, 26
Questions
Business statements 755-6
Maxwell companies, Pension funds 366

Harvey, Mr Nick
Debates etc.
Maiden speech (11:05:92) 404-6
Queen's speech, Privatisation (11:05:92) 404-6

Haselhurst, Mr Alan
Debates etc.
Queen's speech, Privatisation (11:05:92) 416-20
Questions
M11, Motorway service areas 17-8w

Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Questions
Crime prevention, Local authorities 735

Hawksley, Mr Warren
Questions
Family doctors, Finance 484-5

Hazardous materials
Industrial health & safety 121-2w

Hazardous wastes
Imports 38w, 234w
Wales 38w

Heald, Mr Oliver
Questions
Armed forces, Ethnic monitoring 175w

Health hazards
Smoking 483

"Health of the Nation Consultation Paper"
483

Health service staff
Contracts of employment 83w

Health services
81-2w
AIDS 485
Social class 82w

Health surveys
Carers 213-4w

Heath, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Debates etc.
Speaker's election (27:04:92) 2, 8, 14

Hedges & ditches
Nature conservation 198w, 235-6w

Helicopters
Air force 152w
Army 152w

Hendry, Mr Charles
Questions
Ferro Alloys & Metals, Air pollution control 131w
Museums & galleries, Buxton 122w

Heppell, Mr John
Debates etc.
Maiden speech (11:05:92) 413-6
Queen's speech, Privatisation (11:05:92) 413-6
Questions
Africa, Overseas aid 31w

Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael, President of the Board of Trade
Debates etc.
British Coal & British Rail (Transfer Proposals) Bill, 1R (07:05:92) 161
Questions
Monopolies & Mergers Commission, Takeovers 146w

Hicks, Mr Robert
Questions
Housing construction, Local government revenue 609

Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L
Debates etc.
Queen's speech, Environment local government & education (12:05:92) 518-21

Higher civil servants
Dept for Education 62w
Dept of Employment 80w
Dept of Health 83-4w
Dept of Social Security 93-4w
Dept of the Environment 194-5w
Dept of Trade & Industry 143w, 169w
Dept of Transport 16w
Ethnic minorities 16w, 62w, 76-7w, 80w, 83-4w, 93-4w, 123-4w, 143w, 168-9w, 179w, 185w, 194-5w, 211w
Ethnic monitoring 239-40w
Government departments 239w
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 123-4w, 179w
Ministry of Defence 239-40w
Northern Ireland Office 168w, 211w
Treasury 76-7w
Welsh Office 185w

Higher Education Funding Council for Wales
35-6w

Highways (Road Humps) Regulations 1990
Questions
71w

Hill, Mr James
Debates etc.
Queen's speech, Privatisation (11:05:92) 411-3
Questions
Empty housing, Homelessness 612-3

Hillsborough Stadium
Coroners 33w

Hillsborough Stadium Inquiry
208w

Hinchliffe, Mr David
Questions
British Coal Corporation, Privatisation 146w
Crown courts, Yorkshire & Humberside 26w
Dept of Health 209w
Family doctors, Budgeting 80w
Hospital closures 31w
Local government finance 126w
Local government social services, Finance 218w
M1-M62 link 17w
M1-M62 link, Environment protection 17w
M1-M62 link, Greenbelt 17w
M1-M62 link, Road construction 227-9w
M1-M62 link, Road safety 16w
Mental health community care 86w
Mental health services 86w
Motorways, Road construction 229-30w
NHS, Audit 85-6w
Residential care, Elderly 217w
Residential care, Income support 224-5w
Residential care, Inquiries 218w
Residential care, Local government functions 31w
Residential care, Nursing homes 217w
Roads, Manchester 17w

HIV infection
"Disability Handbook" 96w

HM Inspectorate of Pollution
Environment protection 613-4
Finance 614

HM Inspectorate of Schools
Public appointments 66w

HMS Turbulent
Fires 50-1w

Hoey, Ms Kate
Debates etc.
Football (08:05:92) 347-50
Local government finance, England (14:05:92) 767-8

Hoey, Ms Kate—continued
Questions
County Hall 127w
Rented housing, Housing construction 745
Zimbabwe, Overseas aid 32w

Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas, Minister of State, Foreign & Commonwealth Office
Questions
Abu Dhabi, Bank of Credit & Commerce International 26w, 193w
Antarctic, Environment protection 239w
European Movement, UK contributions 53w
Government buildings, Security vetting 193w
Iran, Bahai sect 193w
Iran, Foreign policy 192-3w
Iraq, Human rights 192w
Iraq, Weapons 191-2w
Kurdistan, Elections 242w
Lockerbie, Criminal investigation 193-4w
Macedonia, Recognition of states 190w
Moldavia, Know-how Fund 110w
Nagorno Karabakh, Overseas aid 241w
Slovenia, Know-how Fund 110w
Subsidiarity 54w
Treaty on European Union, European Parliament 53w
UN Economic Commission for Europe 191w
World Commission on Culture & Development 191w

Hogg, Mr Norman
Questions
M80, Road construction 156-7w

Holyhead
Railway travel 356

Home Grown Timber Advisory Committee
Environment protection 178w

"Home Office Electoral Registration Campaign"
210w

Home Robertson, Mr John
Debates etc.
Queen's speech, Economic situation (13:05:92) 711

Home visits
Disability living allowance 98w

Homelessness
128w
Council housing 14w, 609-10
Empty housing 612-3
Government grants to voluntary organisations 236w
Leeds 236w
Mortgage defaulters 13-4w

Homicide
Angola 112w

Hong Kong
Administrative costs 111w
Conditions of employment 111w
Official hospitality 111w
Uniforms 110-1w

Hong Kong Bank
89w

Hood, Mr Jimmy
Debates etc.
Queen's speech, Privatisation (11:05:92) 412

Hoon, Mr Geoffrey
Questions
Community care, Elderly 86w

Hospital beds
Intensive care 214-7w

Hospital closures
31w

Hospital waiting lists
489-90
Out-patients 165-6w

Hospitals
Construction 359-60
South Glamorgan 359-60

Hotels
Non-domestic rates 211w
Northern Ireland 211w

House of Commons debates
Speaker's rulings & statements (14:05:92) 756-7

House of Commons division of time
Private Members' time (07:05:92) 162

House of Commons sessional orders
(06:05:92) 47-9

House of Fraser
Company investigations 143-4w

"House Returns, 1991/92"
(12:05:92) 474-9

Housing
Mentally ill 236w
Radon gas 135w
Rural areas 235w
West Yorkshire 236w

Housing associations
Housing completions 56w

Housing benefits
Government grants to local authorities 49w

Housing completions
Housing associations 56w

Housing construction
Local government revenue 609
Northern Ireland Housing Executive 168w
Rented housing 745

Housing Corporation
56w, 235w

Housing Defects Act 1984
Questions
127-8w

Housing investment programmes
Defective housing 605

Housing revenue accounts
41-3w

Housing standards
Newcastle-under-Lyme 132w
Stoke on Trent 132w

Howard, Rt Hon Michael, Secretary of State for the Environment
Debates etc.
Local government finance, Ministerial statements (14:05:92) 758-72
Non-Domestic Rating Bill, 1R (07:05:92) 162
Queen's speech, Environment local government & education (12:05:92) 506-15
Questions
Anglian Water 602-3
British Gas 136-7w
Carbon dioxide, Air pollution control 237w
Dept of the Environment, Ethnic monitoring 195w
Dept of the Environment, Higher civil servants 194-5w
Local government reform 616-7
Local government reform, Derbyshire 615-6
Local government reform, Essex 616-7
Local government reform, Isle of Wight 617
River Calder, Sewage 602
River Doe Lea, River pollution 603
Sewage, Water treatment 602
Urban Regeneration Agency, Accountability 618

Howarth, Mr Alan
Debates etc.
Local government finance, England (14:05:92) 766

Howarth, Mr George
Questions
Anorexia 487
Empty housing, Council housing 613

Howe Committee
see Residential Homes Staffing Inquiry

Howell, Rt Hon David
Debates etc.
Queen's speech, Foreign policy (08:05:92) 293-6, 307-8, 314, 338

Howells, Dr Kim
Debates etc.
Education, Mid Glamorgan (12:05:92) 595, 599
Severn bridge, Road tolls (06:05:92) 157
Questions
Mozambique, Overseas aid 370
Training, Wales 364
Young offenders, South Wales 36w

Hughes, Mr Kevin
Debates etc.
Maiden speech (11:05:92) 438-9
Queen's speech, Privatisation (11:05:92) 438-9

Hughes, Mr Robert
Debates etc.
Queen's speech, Economic situation (13:05:92) 629, 630, 631
Queen's speech, Privatisation (11:05:92) 376, 381, 464
Questions
Business statements 750

Hughes, Mr Roy
Debates etc.
Queen's speech (06:05:92) 89-91
Severn bridge, Road tolls (06:05:92) 145-9, 154, 156

Hughes, Mr Simon
Debates etc.
Local government finance, England (14:05:92) 764
Olympia & York, Points of order (15:05:92) 869
Padiham power station, Orimulsion (14:05:92) 834-5
Queen's speech (06:05:92) 64-5
Queen's speech, Addresses to the Crown (06:05:92) 54
Questions
Alternative energy, Northern Ireland 230w
Asthma, Medical equipment 84w
Business statements 749
Developing countries, Environment protection 142w
Ecolabelling, Publicity 130-1w
Environment, Ministerial duties 171w
Estate Action, Bonamy Estate 233w
HM Inspectorate of Pollution, Finance 614
M1-M62 link, Road construction 72w
National Heritage Memorial Fund, Nature conservation 122-3w
Non-ionizing radiation, Construction materials 131w
Pembroke power station, Orimulsion 188w
Renewable Energy Advisory Group 139w
Reptiles, Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species 235w
Reptiles, Nature conservation 196-7w
Robbery, Offensive weapons 732
Teleworking 87w
Tipping of waste, Methane 131-2w
Transport, Expenditure 230w
Transport of animals, Animal welfare 179w
UN Conference on Environment & Development 56w, 492
Welsh Office, Environment protection 37-8w
Whales, Nature conservation 123w

Human Fertilisation & Embryology Act 1990
Questions
149w

Human rights
Bangladesh 25-6w
Iraq 192w

Hume, Mr John
Debates etc.
Speaker's election (27:04:92) 25-6

Hunt, Rt Hon David, Secretary of State for Wales
Debates etc.
Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill, 1R & 2R* (suspended from preceding session) (08:05:92) 275
Questions
Community charge capping, Wales 188w
Curriculum, Educational assessment 67-8w
Development areas, Dyfed 186w
Foreign investment in UK, Wales 363-4
Forestry, Wales 37-8w
Industrial investment, Wales 35w
Information technology, Industrial investment 219w
INMOS, Government grants 187w
Local government reform, Wales 35w, 39w, 119w, 356-9
Local government revenue, Community charge 36w
Microelectronics industry, Manpower 361
Pilkington Communications 361
Polychlorinated biphenyl, Pontypool 219w
Radiotherapy, North Wales 187w
Sheep, Radioactivity 187-8w
Training, Wales 364
Unemployment, Pembrokeshire 38w
Unemployment, Wales 361-2
Welsh Development Agency, Building repairs 120w
Welsh Development Agency, Information technology 219w
Welsh Development Agency, Labour turnover 219w
Welsh Office, Environment protection 37-8w
Welsh Office, Ethnic monitoring 184-5w
Welsh Office, Higher civil servants 185w
Wind power, Wales 37w
Youth employment, Wales 187w
Youth training, Wales 186w

Hunter, Mr Andrew
Questions
Regional planning & development, South East region 610

Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas, Secretary of State for Foreign & Commonwealth Affairs
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, 1R (07:05:92) 162
Queen's speech, Foreign policy (08:05:92) 276-86, 290, 338
Questions
EC Foreign Affairs Council 242w

Hutton, Mr John
Debates etc.
Maiden speech (06:05:92) 132-5
Queen's speech (06:05:92) 132-5
Questions
Diabetes, Prescriptions 213w

Hydrofluorochlorocarbons
234w
Air pollution 604
Air pollution control 605

ICI
138w

Illegal immigrants
202w

Illsley, Mr Eric
Questions
Environmental Protection Act 1990, Crown immunity 129w

Immigration applications
Members 19w, 206w

Immobilisation of vehicles
Newham 73w

Incinerators
233-4w

Income support
Mortgages 43-4w, 94w, (07:05:92) 266-74
Residential care 224-5w
Water charges 140w
Young people 94w, 181w

Income tax on foreign incomes
Merchant seamen 77w

Independent Living Fund
183-4w

Indonesia
Arms trade 173-4w
Defence Export Services Organisation 174w

Industrial health & safety
Hazardous materials 121-2w
Wales 121-2w

Industrial investment
77w
Information technology 219w
Wales 35w, 219w

Industrial production
150-1w
Pollutants 199-200w

Information
Radioactivity 170w

Information technology
Industrial investment 219w
Welsh Development Agency 219w

INMOS
361
Government grants 187w

Insulation
Energy conservation 133w

Insurance companies
Company taxation 164w

Intelligence services
Accountability 103w
Terrorism (08:05:92) 297-306

Intensive care
481-2
Calderdale Health Authority 214-7w
Hospital beds 214-7w

Interception of Communications Commissioner
Annual reports 172w

Inter-city rail transport
355-6
North Wales 356

Interest payments
(07:05:92) 266-74

Interest rates
114-5w
Germany 113-4w
Japan 115w

International assistance
Commonwealth of Independent States 368-9

International conferences
Oxford Forestry Institute 69w

International Fund for Agricultural Development
UK contributions 141w

International Maritime Organisation
189w

International Stock Exchange
see Stock Exchange

International Whaling Commission
123w

Interpreters
Administration of justice 209-10w

Intimidation
Schools 62w

Investors in People
Companies 39w

IRA
(08:05:92) 297-306

Iran
Bahai sect 193w
Foreign policy 192-3w

Iraq
Arms trade 89w, 144w, 156w, 171w
Human rights 192w
Weapons 191-2w

Iraq-Kuwait conflict
494

Isle of Wight
Local government reform 617

Italy
Parliament & government 744

Jack, Mr Michael, Minister of State, Home Office
Questions
Administration of justice, Expenditure 59-60w
Benton, Anthony 18w
Civil disorder, Coventry 734-5
Convictions 201w
Crime prevention, Local authorities 733-5
Klebeck, Kurt, War crimes 118w
National Council of Victim Support, Finance 741
Neighbourhood watch schemes 734
Police 734
Rape, Marriage 202w
Squatting 61w
Victim support schemes 201w
Victim support schemes, Finance 740-1
Voluntary organisations 202w
War crimes, Channel Islands 118w
Young offenders, Crime prevention 203w
Young offenders, Parental responsibility 740

Jackson, Ms Glenda
Debates etc.
Maiden speech (11:05:92) 442-3
Queen's speech, Privatisation (11:05:92) 442-3

Jackson, Mrs Helen
Debates etc.
Maiden speech (11:05:92) 420-2
Public petitions, Nursing homes (13:05:92) 720
Queen's speech, Privatisation (11:05:92) 420-2

Janner, Mr Greville
Questions
EC integration 493
Ethnic monitoring, Dept for Education 61w
Ethnic monitoring, Dept of Employment 79w
Ethnic monitoring, Dept of Health 84w
Ethnic monitoring, Dept of Social Security 93w
Ethnic monitoring, Dept of the Environment 195w
Ethnic monitoring, Dept of Trade & Industry 168-9w
Ethnic monitoring, Dept of Transport 16w
Ethnic monitoring, Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 124w
Ethnic monitoring, Ministry of Defence 239w
Ethnic monitoring, Northern Ireland Office 211w
Ethnic monitoring, Treasury 77w
Ethnic monitoring, Welsh Office 184-5w
Higher civil servants, Dept for Education 62w
Higher civil servants, Dept of Employment 80w
Higher civil servants, Dept of Health 83-4w
Higher civil servants, Dept of Social Security 93-4w

Janner, Mr Greville*—*continued
Higher civil servants, Dept of the Environment 194-5w
Higher civil servants, Dept of Trade & Industry 143w, 169w
Higher civil servants, Dept of Transport 16w
Higher civil servants, Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 123-4w, 179w
Higher civil servants, Ministry of Defence 239-40w
Higher civil servants, Northern Ireland Office 168w, 211w
Higher civil servants, Treasury 76-7w
Higher civil servants, Welsh Office 185w
Police, Finance 744

Japan
Interest rates 115w

Jessel, Mr Toby
Debates etc.
Road safety (15:05:92) 859, 861, 863, 864-70, 873
Questions
Back pain 484
NHS trusts 81w

Johnston, Sir Russell
Debates etc.
Queen's speech, Foreign policy (08:05:92) 281, 314-9
Speaker's election (27:04:92) 13
Questions
European Movement, UK contributions 53w

Jones, Mr Barry
Questions
Local government reform, Wales 357
Radiotherapy, North Wales 187w
Social Security Commissioners, Wales 181w
Unemployment, Wales 361-2
Youth employment, Wales 187w
Youth training, Wales 186w

***Jones, Mr Gwilym**, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Welsh Office*
Questions
Cardiff Royal Infirmary 37w
Coastal areas, Environment protection 218w
Coastal erosion, South Wales 362
Economic recession, Neath 36w
Employment level, Wales 364-5
Environmental impact assessment, Wales 120w
Hazardous wastes, Imports 38w
Hospitals, Construction 359-60
Llwyncelyn community home 121w
Mental patients, Wales 119w
NHS finance, Wales 360
NHS trusts, Wales 36w
Nuclear accidents, Emergency planning 185w
Orimulsion, Air pollution 121w
Orimulsion, Pembroke power station 188w
Planning permission, Wales 37w
Polychlorinated biphenyl, Waste management 67w
Recycling, Domestic wastes 186-7w
Unemployment, Wales 35w
Young offenders, South Wales 36w

Jones, Mr Ieuan Wyn
Questions
Inter-city rail transport, North Wales 356
Unemployment, Wales 362-3

Jones, Mr Jon Owen
Questions
Cardiff Royal Infirmary 37w
Environment protection 125w
Sunday trading 367-8

Jones, Mr Martyn
Questions
Planning permission, Wales 37w

Jones, Mr Nigel
Debates etc.
Local government finance, England (14:05:92) 765
Maiden speech (15:05:92) 877-9
Road safety (15:05:92) 877-9

Jones, Mr Robert B
Questions
EC Labour & Social Affairs Council 151w
Family doctors, Budgeting 80w
UN Conference on Environment & Development, USA 604

Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Debates etc.
Queen's speech (06:05:92) 68

Jowell, Ms Tessa
Debates etc.
Finance Bill, Ways & means res (14:05:92) 790-1
Maiden speech (14:05:92) 790-1

Juries
Criminal proceedings 367
Scottish courts 161w

Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Debates etc.
Queen's speech, Foreign policy (08:05:92) 286-93, 342

Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Debates etc.
Queen's speech, Economic situation (13:05:92) 672, 707
Queen's speech, Environment local government & education (12:05:92) 581
Questions
Mozambique, Overseas aid 370-1
Prison education services 731

Kenya
Overseas aid 31w

***Key, Mr Robert**, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Dept of National Heritage*
Debates etc.
Football (08:05:92) 350-4
Questions
Concessionary television licences, Pensioners 172-3w
Museums & galleries, Buxton 122w
National Heritage Memorial Fund, Nature conservation 122-3w
Orchestras, Arts finance 122w

Khabra, Mr Piara S
Debates etc.
Maiden speech (08:05:92) 335-6
Queen's speech, Foreign policy (08:05:92) 335-6

Kilfedder, Mr James
Questions
Business statements 749-50

King's Cross Railways (No 2) Bill 1991/92
Debates etc.
2R order read (12:05:92) 473, (14:05:92) 729

Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Debates etc.
Queen's speech (06:05:92) 57-63
Queen's speech, Economic situation (13:05:92) 631-2
Speaker's election (27:04:92) 22-3
Questions
Conservative Party 493
Training, Finance 742-3

Kirkwall
Social security appeal tribunals 184w

Kirkwood, Mr Archy
Debates etc.
Queen's speech (06:05:92) 76-7

Klebeck, Kurt
War crimes 33-4w, 105-6w, 109w, 118w

Knapman, Mr Roger
Debates etc.
Local government finance, England (14:05:92) 767

Knight, Mrs Angela
Debates etc.
Maiden speech (11:05:92) 422-5
Queen's speech, Privatisation (11:05:92) 422-5

Know-how Fund
Bulgaria 369-70
Moldavia 110w
Slovenia 110w

Knox, Mr David
Debates etc.
Queen's speech (06:05:92) 80-3
Questions
Prison population 200w

Kurdistan
Elections 242w

Kynoch, Mr George
Questions
Further education, Scotland 92w
Home Grown Timber Advisory Committee, Environment protection 178w

Labour costs
40w

Labour turnover
Welsh Development Agency 219w

Lamont, Rt Hon Norman, Chancellor of the Exchequer
Debates etc.
Queen's speech, Economic situation (13:05:92) 628-38
Questions
Retail price index, Council tax 225w

Lancaster Prison
731

Land acquisition
Forestry Commission 157w
Urban Regeneration Agency 618

Landlord & tenant
Law reform 109w
Public houses 87w, 116w

Lang, Rt Hon Ian, Secretary of State for Scotland
Debates etc.
Bankruptcy (Scotland) Bill, 1R (08:05:92) 275
Pittenween Harbour Order Confirmation Bill, 1R (13:05:92) 601
Queen's speech, Privatisation (11:05:92) 461-6
Questions
Community charge capping, Scotland 178w
Rents to mortgages scheme, Scotland 156w, 225-6w

Law reform
Landlord & tenant 109w

Lawrence, Mr Ivan
Debates etc.
Terrorism, Intelligence services (08:05:92) 302
Questions
Juries, Criminal proceedings 367
Neighbourhood watch schemes 734

Leeds
Homelessness 236w

Legal aid
Criminal proceedings 27w
Expenditure 210w

Leicester
Council house sales 608
Tipping of waste 13w

***Leigh, Mr Edward** Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Technology*
Questions
Banks, Small businesses 232w

***Leigh, Mr Edward**—continued*
Environment protection, Equipment 231w
Meteorological satellites, Environment 145w
Postage stamps, World War II 143w
Seekers Estate Agencies, Franchising 168w

Leighton, Mr Ron
Questions
Construction materials, Balance of trade 12w
Immobilisation of vehicles, Newham 73w
Industrial investment 77w
Investors in People, Companies 39w
Labour costs 40w
Treaty on European Union, Economic & monetary union 112-4w
Youth training 39w

***Lennox-Boyd, Mr Mark**, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Foreign & Commonwealth Office*
Questions
Africa, Overseas aid 31w
Angola, Homicide 112w
Bangladesh, Human rights 25-6w
Bulgaria, Know-how Fund 369-70
Commonwealth of Independent States, EC aid 55-6w
Commonwealth of Independent States, International assistance 368-9
Commonwealth of Independent States, Private sector 369
Council of Europe, Visas 241w
Developing countries, Debts 32w, 223w
Developing countries, Debts written off 222w
Developing countries, Environment protection 142w
Developing countries, Overseas aid 222w
Eastern Europe, Overseas aid 32w
EC aid 371-2
Foreign & Commonwealth Office, Oral questions 369
International Fund for Agricultural Development, UK contributions 141w
Kenya, Overseas aid 31w
Malawi, Overseas aid 140-1w
Mozambique, Overseas aid 370-1
Overseas aid 32w, 141-2w
Overseas aid, Expenditure 141w, 222w
Overseas aid, Pollution control 221-2w
Overseas aid, Rain forests 32w
Oxford Forestry Institute, International conferences 69w
Poland, Visas 53-4w
RMS St Helena 68w
UN Conference on Environment & Development, Family planning 68-9w
Zimbabwe, Overseas aid 32w

Lerwick
Social security appeal tribunals 184w

Lester, Mr Jim
Questions
Commonwealth of Independent States, Private sector 369
Environment protection 492-3

Lestor, Miss Joan
Questions
Davies, Laura, Transplant surgery 490-2
Feltham Young Offenders Institution, Prison education services 731-2

Lewis, Mr Terry
Questions
Electoral register, British residents abroad 166w
Electoral register, Greater Manchester 166w

Liability
Pollution 138w

Lighting
Energy conservation 132w

***Lilley, Rt Hon Peter**, Secretary of State for Social Security*
Debates etc.
Queen's speech, Public expenditure (07:05:92) 254-65

Liverpool
Defective housing 605-6

Livingstone, Mr Ken
Debates etc.
Olympia & York, Points of order (15:05:92) 868
Road safety (15:05:92) 879

***Lloyd, Mr Peter**, Minister of State, Home Office*
Questions
Absent voting 61w
Absent voting, British residents abroad 20w, 116w
Absent voting, Election administration 735
Absent voting, South Africa 206w
Boundary Commission for England, Parliamentary constituencies 60w
Boundary Commission for Wales 22w
Boundary Commission for Wales, Parliamentary constituencies 60w
Electoral register 118w, 735-7
Electoral register, Publicity 118-9w
Feltham Young Offenders Institution, Prison education services 731-2
"Home Office Electoral Registration Campaign" 210w
Parliamentary constituencies, Essex 60w
Parliamentary constituencies, Greater London 60w
Parole 115-6w
Parole, Terminal care 116w
Police custody, Prison population 116-8w, 200w
Police custody, Prisoners 19-20w
Polling stations, Access to buildings 737
Prison accommodation 203w
Prison education services 731-2
Prison education services, Expenditure 731
Prison population 200w
Prisoners on remand, Transport 737
Sunday trading, Prosecutions 22w
Young offenders, Custodial treatment 204w
Young offenders, Remand in custody 203-4w
Young offenders, Suicide 20-1w

Lloyd's Bank
89-90w

Llwyd, Mr Elfyn
Questions
Employment opportunities, Gwynedd 35w
Prisoners on remand, Transport 737

Llwyncelyn community home
121w

Local authority powers
Road traffic control 106-7w

"Local Bus Deregulation & the Consumer"
18w

Local Government Boundary Commission for England
57-9w

Local Government Boundary Commission for Northern Ireland
106w

Local government constituencies
59w
Greater London 57-9w
Northern Ireland 106w

Local government finance
126w
Audit Commission for Local Authorities in England & Wales 127w
Central-local government relations 609
Ministerial statements (14:05:92) 758-72

Local government functions
Recycling 195w
Residential care 31w

***Local government functions**—continued*
Water pollution 14w

Local government reform
39w, 130w, 616-7
Derbyshire 615-6
Essex 616-7
Isle of Wight 617
Monmouth 39w
Wales 35w, 119w, 356-9

Local government revenue
Capital investment 127w
Community charge 36w
Council house sales 127w, 608
Grimsby 11-3w
Housing construction 609
Wales 36w

Local government social services
Finance 218w
Mentally ill 147-8w

Lockerbie
Bombings 21-2w, 90w, 177w, 180w
Criminal investigation 177w, 193-4w

London Ambulance Service
80-1w

London Channel Tunnel Group
Channel Tunnel Rail Link Forum 108w

London Residuary Body
127w

London Tilbury & Southend Line
Capital investment 107w

London Tourist Board
Bus services 189w

London Underground
108w

London Underground (Green Park) Bill 1991/92
Debates etc.
2R order read (13:05:92) 601, (14:05:92) 729

London Underground (Jubilee) Bill 1991/92
Debates etc.
2R order read (13:05:92) 601, (14:05:92) 729

Lord, Mr Michael
Questions
Water pollution 125-6w

Lord Chancellor's Dept
Clergy 26w

Loyden, Mr Eddie
Questions
Defective housing, Liverpool 606

***Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas**, Attorney-General*
Questions
Benton, Anthony, Complaints against police 33w
Crown prosecutors, Codes of practice 34w
Director of Public Prosecutions, Disclosure of information 33w
Extradition 33w
Fraud, Criminal investigation 365
Klebeck, Kurt, War crimes 33-4w
Lockerbie, Criminal investigation 194w
Maxwell companies, Pension funds 366
Olympia & York, Company liquidations 365
Sunday trading 367-8

Lynne, Ms Liz
Questions
Community care 81w
Davies, Laura, Transplant surgery 488
Homelessness 128w

Lynx helicopters
152w

M1-M62 link
17w
Environment protection 17w

M1-M62 link—continued
Greenbelt 17w
Road construction 72w, 227-9w
Road safety 16w

M4
Road safety 75w

M11
Motorway service areas 17-8w

M66
Road construction 73w

M80
Road construction 156-7w

Maastricht summit
206w

Macedonia
Recognition of states 190w

McFall, Mr John
Questions
HM Inspectorate of Pollution, Environment protection 613-4

McGrady, Mr Eddie
Debates etc.
Queen's speech, Environment local government & education (12:05:92) 570-2

***MacGregor, Rt Hon John**, Secretary of State for Transport*
Questions
British Rail, External financing limits 7w
EC Transport Council 3-4w
Transport, Expenditure 230w

Mackinlay, Mr Andrew
Debates etc.
Maiden speech (06:05:92) 106-9
Queen's speech (06:05:92) 106-9
Road safety (15:05:92) 902-4
Questions
Environmental impact assessment 130w
Exservicemen, Ministerial duties 21w
Planning permission, Extractive industries 195w
Planning permission, Waste disposal 12w
Poland, Visas 53-4w, 203w
Police, Local authorities 116w
Police authorities 103w
Police Complaints Authority, Dover Harbour Police 204w
Police Complaints Authority, Tilbury 204w
Ports, Tilbury 71-2w
Public houses, Landlord & tenant 116w
South Essex Health Consortium 217-8w
VAT, Sanitary protection 77w

***Maclean, Mr David**, Minister for the Environment and Countryside*
Debates etc.
Padiham power station, Orimulsion (14:05:92) 834, 836, 844-8
Questions
Aerosols, Air pollution 604-5
Beaches, EC law 125w
Carbon dioxide, Air pollution 234w
Carbon dioxide, Air pollution control 132w, 139w
Cetaceans 197w
Coastal areas, Environment protection 197w
Coastal areas, Sea pollution 139-40w
Concrete, Pollution control 614
Contaminated land registers 198w
Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species, Enforcement 235w
Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species, Reptiles 235w
Countryside, Environment protection 199w
EC Environment Council 197w
Ecolabelling, Publicity 130-1w
Energy conservation 137w
Energy conservation, Lighting 132w
Environment protection 125w, 198w, 615
Environment protection, EC law 133w
Environment Week 13w
Environmental Protection Act 1990, Crown immunity 129w

Maclean, Mr David—continued
Estuaries, Nature conservation 138w
Ferro Alloys & Metals, Air pollution control 131w
Genetically modified organisms, EC law 134w
Hazardous wastes, Imports 234w
Hedges & ditches, Nature conservation 198w, 235-6w
HM Inspectorate of Pollution, Environment protection 613-4
HM Inspectorate of Pollution, Finance 614
Hydrofluorochlorocarbons, Air pollution 604
Hydrofluorochlorocarbons, Air pollution control 605
Incinerators 233-4w
National Rivers Authority, Coastal protection 129w
Nitrogen dioxide, Air pollution 236-8w
Nitrous oxide, Catalytic converters 13w
Noise control 126w
Noise control, Codes of practice 237w
Non-ionizing radiation, Construction materials 131w
Orimulsion, Air pollution 614-5
Ozone layer, Air pollution control 234w
Pollutants, Industrial production 199-200w
Radiation hazards 604
Radioactive waste disposal 139w
Radioactive waste disposal, Broomfield Hospital 235w
Radioactive wastes, Road construction 190w
Radon gas, Housing 135w
Recycling, Chelmsford 126w
Recycling, Domestic wastes 198-9w
Recycling, Local authorities 126w
Recycling, Local government functions 195w
Recycling, National parks 196w
Reptiles, Nature conservation 196-7w
Smoke control areas 236w
Synthetic fibres, Air pollution control 138w
Tipping of waste, Leicester 13w
Tipping of waste, Methane 131-2w
UN Conference on Environment & Development 56w
UN Conference on Environment & Development, USA 604
Waste disposal, Statistics 233w
Waste management 135w
Water pollution 125-6w
Water pollution, Local government functions 14w
Zoos 137w

Maclennan, Mr Robert
Debates etc.
Queen's speech, Foreign policy (08:05:92) 318-9
Terrorism, Intelligence services (08:05:92) 301

***McLoughlin, Mr Patrick**, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Dept of Employment*
Questions
Advisory Conciliation & Arbitration Service, Annual reports 6w
Dept of Employment, Ethnic monitoring 79w
Dept of Employment, Higher civil servants 80w
Industrial health & safety, Hazardous materials 121-2w
Investors in People, Companies 39w
Labour costs 40w
Manufacturing industries, Manpower 150-1w
Unemployment 40w
Unemployment, Building industry 220w
Unemployment benefits, Social security benefits disqualification 40w
Youth training 39-40w

McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Debates etc.
Queen's speech (06:05:92) 86-8

Madden, Mr Max
Questions
Business statements 756
Foreign & Commonwealth Office, Oral questions 369

Madel, Mr David
Debates etc.
Queen's speech (06:05:92) 96-9

Maginnis, Mr Ken
Questions
Handicapped pupils, Northern Ireland 212-3w
Handicapped pupils, Teachers 212w
Police 734
Special education, Teachers 212w

Mahon, Mrs Alice
Questions
Business statements 753
Intensive care, Hospital beds 214-7w
NHS finance 482-3

Maiden speeches
Ainger, Nick (14:05:92) 838-42
Ainsworth, Robert (12:05:92) 538-40
Austin-Walker, John (14:05:92) 799-802
Bayley, Hugh (07:05:92) 216-20
Betts, Clive (06:05:92) 83-6
Boyce, Jimmy (13:05:92) 693-5
Brandreth, Gyles (12:05:92) 529-31
Byers, Stephen (12:05:92) 574-5
Campbell, Anne (12:05:92) 515-8
Chisholm, Malcolm (07:05:92) 209-10
Clapham, Michael (06:05:92) 95-6
Clarke, Eric (11:05:92) 429-31
Coffey, Ann (12:05:92) 566-7
Connarty, Michael (13:05:92) 673-6
Corston, Jean (13:05:92) 680-2
Cunningham, Jim (12:05:92) 558-9
Dafis, Cynog (11:05:92) 425-7
Donohoe, Brian H (13:05:92) 678-80
Eagle, Angela (11:05:92) 453-5
Etherington, Bill (11:05:92) 408-11
Evans, Jonathan (12:05:92) 575-8
Foster, Don (12:05:92) 521-3
Fox, Liam (12:05:92) 540-2
Gapes, Mike (08:05:92) 322-5
Gerrard, Neil (12:05:92) 554-6
Hall, Mike (06:05:92) 122-5
Hanson, David (06:05:92) 137-41
Harvey, Nick (11:05:92) 404-6
Heppell, John (11:05:92) 413-6
Hughes, Kevin (11:05:92) 438-9
Hutton, John (06:05:92) 132-5
Jackson, Glenda (11:05:92) 442-3
Jackson, Helen (11:05:92) 420-2
Jones, Nigel (15:05:92) 877-9
Jowell, Tessa (14:05:92) 790-1
Khabra, Piara S (08:05:92) 335-6
Knight, Angela (11:05:92) 422-5
Mackinlay, Andrew (06:05:92) 106-9
Maitland, Olga (12:05:92) 563-6
Mandelson, Peter (14:05:92) 802-5
Milburn, Alan (11:05:92) 450-3
Miller, Andrew (06:05:92) 130-2
Morris, Estelle (12:05:92) 562-3
Mudie, George (13:05:92) 691-3
O'Brien, Mike (13:05:92) 684-6
Pickthall, Colin (13:05:92) 686-9
Prentice, Bridget (07:05:92) 199-201
Prentice, Gordon (13:05:92) 689-91
Roche, Barbara (07:05:92) 207-8
Simpson, Alan (13:05:92) 660-2
Smith, Llew (07:05:92) 224-6
Spink, Robert (11:05:92) 436-8
Spring, Richard (11:05:92) 406-8
Tipping, Paddy (11:05:92) 446-8
Wicks, Malcolm (13:05:92) 695-7
Wright, Tony (12:05:92) 542-4

Maitland, Lady Olga
Debates etc.
Maiden speech (12:05:92) 563-6
Queen's speech, Environment local government & education (12:05:92) 563-6
Road safety (15:05:92) 874-7

***Major, Rt Hon John**, Prime Minister, First Lord of the Treasury and Minister for the Civil Service*
Debates etc.
Queen's speech (06:05:92) 63-73
Speaker's election (27:04:92) 20-2
Questions
Armed forces casualties, Accidents 494
Armed forces medical services, Armed forces pay 3w
Arms trade, Iraq 171w
Bankruptcy (Scotland) Act 1985, Departmental responsibilities 2w
Cabinet committees 105w, 171w
Carbon dioxide, Air pollution control 104w
Carbon tax 743-4
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, Departmental responsibilities 104-5w
Citizen's Charter 496
Common agricultural policy, EC reform 103w
Conservative Party 493
Conservative Party, Party conferences 743
Dalai Lama 209w
Dept of Health 209w
Dept of National Heritage, Departmental responsibilities 105w
Devolution 495
EC Committee of the Regions 21w
EC integration 493-5
Economic situation 495-6
Environment, Ministerial duties 171w
Environment protection 492-3
European Security Conference Parliamentary Assembly 105w
Exservicemen, Ministerial duties 21w
Frontiers, EC internal trade 741-2
Gas tariffs 744-5
Intelligence services, Accountability 103w
Interception of Communications Commissioner, Annual reports 172w
Italy, Parliament & government 744
Klebeck, Kurt, War crimes 105-6w
Lockerbie, Bombings 21-2w, 90w
Manufacturing industries, West Yorkshire 494
Maxwell companies, Pension funds 90-1w
NHS administration 746
NHS trusts, Public participation 743
Nuclear weapons tests 90w
Official engagements 90w, 172w
Police, Finance 744
Police authorities 103w
Prime Minister, Clergy 22w
Rented housing, Housing construction 745
Scotland 743-4
Terrorism 493
Textile industry 496
Training, Finance 742-3
UN Conference on Environment & Development 492
Urban Regeneration Agency 90w
War crimes, Channel Islands 22w, 106w
Whales 171w

Malawi
Overseas aid 140-1w

Mallon, Mr Seamus
Debates etc.
Queen's speech, Environment local government & education (12:05:92) 531-4

Manchester
Empty housing 612
Roads 17w

Mandelson, Mr Peter
Debates etc.
Finance Bill, Ways & means res (14:05:92) 802-5
Maiden speech (14:05:92) 802-5

Mans, Mr Keith
Questions
Beaches, EC law 125w

Manufacturing industries
Manpower 150-1w
West Yorkshire 494

Marek, Dr John
Questions
Boundary Commission for Wales 22w
Gibraltar, European Parliament members 24w
Railway transport, North Wales 355-6
RMS St Helena 68w

Marine animals
Nature conservation 179-80w

Marland, Mr Paul
Debates etc.
Local government finance, England (14:05:92) 764
Questions
Business statements 751

Marlow, Mr Tony
Debates etc.
European Communities (Amendment) Bill, Points of order (12:05:92) 497
Queen's speech (06:05:92) 112-3
Treaty of Rome, Points of order (13:05:92) 619
Questions
Business statements 753

Marriage
Rape 202w

Marshall, Mr John
Debates etc.
Queen's speech, Economic situation (13:05:92) 668-72
Queen's speech, Environment local government & education (12:05:92) 524
Queen's speech, Public expenditure (07:05:92) 165, 172
Questions
Treaty on European Union 111w

Marshall, Sir Michael
Debates etc.
Queen's speech, Privatisation (11:05:92) 377
Questions
Business statements 750
Overseas aid 32w

Martin, Mr David
Debates etc.
Queen's speech (06:05:92) 103-6
Questions
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, Departmental responsibilities 104-5w
Dept of National Heritage, Departmental responsibilities 105w
Private rented housing 130w

***Mates, Mr Michael**, Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office*
Questions
Hotels, Non-domestic rates 211w
Northern Ireland Office, Ethnic monitoring 211w
Northern Ireland Office, Higher civil servants 168w, 211w

Matrix Churchill
144w

***Mawhinney, Dr Brian**, Minister for Health*
Questions
Anorexia 487
Asthma, Medical equipment 84w
Community care 81w
Davies, Laura, Transplant surgery 488
Dentists, Pay 85w, 149-50w
Diabetes, Medical equipment 83w
Diabetes, Prescriptions 213w
Family doctors, Budgeting 80w
Health service staff, Contracts of employment 83w
Health services, Social class 82w
Intensive care 481-2
Intensive care, Hospital beds 214-7w
NHS finance 482-3
NHS finance, Charitable donations 487-9
NHS trusts 81w, 213w
Nurses, Career structure 148w

***Mawhinney, Dr Brian**—continued*
Prescriptions, Costs 31w
Preventive medicine, Family doctors 486-7
Residential care, Local government functions 31w
Resolve, Upper Waiting Hall 84w
Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain, Upper Waiting Hall 167w
South Essex Health Consortium 217-8w
Southend Health Authority 482
Surgery, Death 481
Tobacco, EC countries 84w
Tobacco advertising 30w, 214w
Tobacco advertising, EC action 167w

Maxwell, Robert
British International Helicopters 74-5w

Maxwell companies
96w, (07:05:92) 163-265
Pension funds 46w, 90-1w, 95w, 223w, 366
Pensioners 140w

Meacher, Mr Michael
Debates etc.
Queen's speech, Public expenditure (07:05:92) 250-8, 261-2

Measles
Death 86w
Vaccination 487

Meat
Food hygiene 124w
Food labelling 124w
Refrigeration 30w

Meat Hygiene Service
124w

Medical equipment
Asthma 84w
Diabetes 83w

Medical ethics
Abortion 149w

Medical research
Myalgic encephalomyelitis 173w

***Mellor, Rt Hon David**, Secretary of State for National Heritage*
Questions
Hillsborough Stadium Inquiry 208w
Radio broadcasting licences 172w
Sports Council for England, Public appointments 173w

Members
Immigration applications 19w, 206w

Members' facilities
Newspaper press 109w

Members' oath & affirmation
(28:04:92) 28-38, (29:04:92) 39-42, (30:04:92) 43-4, (05:05:92) 45-6, (06:05:92) 47, (08:05:92) 275, (12:05:92) 473
Speaker's rulings & statements (28:04:92) 28-9, 34

Members' secretaries
Top Salaries Review Body 39w

Mental health community care
86w

Mental health services
86w

Mental patients
Wales 119w

Mentally ill
Housing 236w
Local government social services 147-8w

Merchant, Mr Piers
Debates etc.
Queen's speech, Privatisation (11:05:92) 439-42
Road safety (15:05:92) 890-3
Questions
Tobacco advertising 30w

Merchant seamen
Income tax on foreign incomes 77w

Merchant Shipping Act 1988
Questions
17w

Mersey Docks & Harbour Bill (HL) 1989/90
Debates etc.
3R order read (13:05:92) 601
3R* (14:05:92) 729

Meteorological satellites
Environment 145w

Methane
Tipping of waste 131-2w

Metropolitan Police
73w, 201w, (08:05:92) 297-306

MI5
103w, (08:05:92) 297-306

MI6
(06:05:92) 57-144, 103w

Michael, Mr Alun
Debates etc.
Severn bridge, Road tolls (06:05:92) 154
Questions
Cooperative societies, EC action 79w
Local government reform, Wales 359
Meat, Refrigeration 30w

Microelectronics industry
Manpower 361
Wales 361

Mid Glamorgan
Education (12:05:92) 593-600

Midland Bank
232w
Takeovers 89-90w, 232w

Midwives
Career structure 148w

Milburn, Mr Alan
Debates etc.
Maiden speech (11:05:92) 450-3
Queen's speech, Privatisation (11:05:92) 450-3

Military aircraft
152w

Military balance
Defence review 154w

Military ceremonies
Costs 174w
Trident submarines 50w

Miller, Mr Andrew
Debates etc.
Maiden speech (06:05:92) 130-2
Queen's speech (06:05:92) 130-2

Mines & Quarries Act 1954
Questions
138w

Mining
Pollution 138w

Ministerial duties
Environment 171w
Exservicemen 21w

Ministerial statements
Local government finance (14:05:92) 758-72
Terrorism (08:05:92) 297-306

Ministers
Bank of Credit & Commerce International Inquiry 225w

Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food
69w
Ethnic monitoring 124w
Higher civil servants 123-4w, 179w

Ministry of Defence
Ethnic monitoring 239w
Higher civil servants 239-40w

Mirror Group Newspapers
90-1w, 95w

Mitchell, Mr Andrew
Debates etc.
Queen's speech, Addresses to the Crown (06:05:92) 56-7

Mitchell, Mr Austin
Debates etc.
Queen's speech, Economic situation (13:05:92) 634, 635, 649
Questions
Absent voting, British residents abroad 116w
Cabinet committees 171w
Educational assessment, Primary education 34w
Exchange rates, West Germany 113w
Fishing vessels, Shipping registration 17w, 189w
Foreign trade, USA 88w
Income tax on foreign incomes, Merchant seamen 77w
Interest rates 114-5w
Interest rates, Germany 113-4w
Interest rates, Japan 115w
Local government revenue, Grimsby 11-3w
Standard spending assessments 127w
Tax harmonisation 78-9w
Treaty of Rome 25w
Treaty on European Union 24-5w, 115w, 194w
Treaty on European Union, EC law 165w
Treaty on European Union, European Parliament 53w
Unemployment 40w

Mitchell, Sir David
Debates etc.
Queen's speech, Environment local government & education (12:05:92) 559-61

Mobility allowance
Social security claims 101-2w

Moldavia
Know-how Fund 110w

Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Debates etc.
Queen's speech, Economic situation (13:05:92) 666-8
Speaker's election (27:04:92) 23

Monmouth
Local government reform 39w

Monopolies
Bus services 108w

Monopolies & Mergers Commission
Takeovers 146w
United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority 144-5w

Monro, Sir Hector, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Scottish Office
Debates etc.
Forestry (11:05:92) 469-72
Questions
Coastal areas, Environment protection 176w
Coastal protection, Scotland 177w
Estuaries, Nature conservation 176w
Forestry Commission, Land acquisition 157w
Forestry Commission, Privatisation 162w
Home Grown Timber Advisory Committee, Environment protection 178w

Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Debates etc.
Community hosptials, South Trafford (13:05:92) 721-3, 724
Questions
Special constables, Recruitment 202w

Moonie, Dr Lewis
Debates etc.
Queen's speech, Economic situation (13:05:92) 670

Morgan, Mr Rhodri
Debates etc.
Olympia & York, Points of order (15:05:92) 868
Padiham power station, Orimulsion (14:05:92) 839
Road safety (15:05:92) 903, 908
Severn bridge, Road tolls (06:05:92) 149-51, 153, 158
Questions
Assisted areas 233w
Hospitals, Construction 359-60
Information technology, Industrial investment 219w
Welsh Development Agency, Information technology 219w
Welsh Development Agency, Labour turnover 219w

Morris, Rt Hon Alfred
Debates etc.
Local government finance, England (14:05:92) 763-4
Questions
Attendance allowance, Social security claims 100w
Handicap benefits, Social security claims 100w
Maxwell companies, Pension funds 90-1w
Mentally ill, Local government social services 147-8w
Mobility allowance, Social security claims 101-2w
Police custody, Prisoners 19-20w
Social Security Benefits Agency, Disability living allowance 97w

Morris, Ms Estelle
Debates etc.
Maiden speech (12:05:92) 562-3
Queen's speech, Environment local government & education (12:05:92) 562-3

Morris, Rt Hon John
Questions
Maxwell companies, Pension funds 365

Mortgage defaulters
238-9w
Homelessness 13-4w
Repossession orders 27w

Mortgages
Income support 43-4w, 94w, (07:05:92) 266-74

Motorcycles
Driving licences 18w

Motorway service areas
M11 17-8w

Motorways
Road construction 229-30w

Mowlam, Ms Marjorie
Debates etc.
Local government finance, England (14:05:92) 768
Questions
Midland Bank, Takeovers 89w
Monopolies & Mergers Commission, Takeovers 146w

Moynihan Committee
see Renewable Energy Advisory Group

Mozambique
Overseas aid 370-1

Mudie, Mr George
Debates etc.
Maiden speech (13:05:92) 691-3
Queen's speech, Economic situation (13:05:92) 648, 652, 691-3
Questions
Urban Regeneration Agency 128w

Mullin, Mr Chris
Questions
Police, Criminal investigation 738-9

Multinational companies
Taxation 164-5w

Murphy, Mr Paul
Questions
British Rail, Privatisation 356
Education, Wales 36w

Museums & galleries
Buxton 122w

Myalgic encephalomyelitis
96w
Medical research 173w

Nagorno Karabakh
Overseas aid 241w

National Assistance Act 1948
Questions
147-8w

National Association for the Care & Resettlement of Offenders
64w

National Association of Citizens' Advice Bureaux
45w

National Confidential Enquiry into Perioperative Deaths
481

National Council of Victim Support
740-1
Finance 741

National Heritage Memorial Fund
Nature conservation 122-3w

National Meat Hygiene Service
see Meat Hygiene Service

National parks
Recycling 196w

National Radiological Protection Board
82w, 135w

National Rivers Authority
138w
Coastal protection 129w

National Union of Students
62-3w

NATO
175w, (08:05:92) 276-96, 307-46

Natural gas production
4w

Nature conservation
Estuaries 120w, 138w, 176w
Hedges & ditches 198w, 235-6w
Marine animals 179-80w
National Heritage Memorial Fund 122-3w
Reptiles 196-7w
Whales 123w

Navy
Defence procurement 155w

Neath
Economic recession 36w

Needham, Mr Richard, Minister for Trade
Questions
Arms trade, Iraq 89w, 144w
Computer software, Patents 23w
Defence Export Services Organisation, Project Al Yamamah 89w
EC internal trade, Civil servants' secondment 87-8w
European Free Trade Association, European Economic Area 88w
Export Credits Guarantee Department, Supply Estimates 9-10w
Foreign trade, USA 88w

Neighbourhood watch schemes
734

Nelson, Mr Anthony, Economic Secretary to the Treasury
Debates etc.
Queen's speech, Economic situation (13:05:92) 692

Nelson, Mr Anthony—continued
Questions
Bank of Credit & Commerce International, Bank of England 225w
Bank of Credit & Commerce International Inquiry, Ministers 225w
Capital gains tax, Tax yields 163w
Central banks, Economic & monetary union 113w
Cooperative societies, EC action 79w
Exchange rates, West Germany 113w
Interest rates 114-5w
Interest rates, Germany 113-4w
Interest rates, Japan 115w
Public expenditure 78w
Treasury, Ethnic monitoring 77w
Treasury, Higher civil servants 76-7w
Treaty on European Union 115w
Treaty on European Union, EC law 165w
Treaty on European Union, Economic & monetary union 112-4w

Neubert, Sir Michael
Debates etc.
Speaker's election (27:04:92) 2-4
Questions
Building industry 129w

Newcastle-under-Lyme
Housing standards 132w

Newham
Immobilisation of vehicles 73w

Newport Gwent
Social security benefits disqualification 40w

Newspaper press
Members' facilities 109w

Newton, Rt Hon Tony, Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons
Debates etc.
Queen's speech, Economic situation (13:05:92) 708-13
Questions
Business statements 747-56
Parliamentary questions, Civil service agencies 79w
Parliamentary questions, Procedure Select Committee 79w
Top Salaries Review Body, Members' secretaries 39w

NHS
Audit 85-6w

NHS administration
746

NHS finance
85w, 482-3
Charitable donations 487-9
Wales 360

NHS internal market
217-8w

NHS pensions
Civil service agencies 167w

NHS reform
491

NHS trusts
81w, 213w
Public participation 743
Wales 36w

Nicholls, Mr Patrick
Questions
Young offenders, Parental responsibility 740

Nicholson, Mr David
Debates etc.
Queen's speech, Privatisation (11:05:92) 443-6

Nicholson, Miss Emma
Debates etc.
Queen's speech, Public expenditure (07:05:92) 248-50

NIREX
see United Kingdom NIREX

Nitrogen dioxide
Air pollution 236-8w

Nitrous oxide
138w
Catalytic converters 13w

Noise control
126w
Codes of practice 237w

Non-domestic rates
Hammersmith & Fulham 603
Hotels 211w

Non-Domestic Rating Bill 1992/93
Debates etc.
1R (07:05:92) 162

Non-fossil fuel obligation
230w

Non-ionizing radiation
Construction materials 131w

Non-teaching staff
Manpower 65-6w

Norris, Mr Steve, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Dept of Transport
Debates etc.
Road safety (15:05:92) 859
Questions
A13, Road works 107w
Airport & Airspace Capacity Working Group 188-9w
British International Helicopters, Maxwell, Robert 74-5w
Bus services, Greater London 189w
Dept of Transport, Ethnic monitoring 16w
Dept of Transport, Higher civil servants 16w
Fishing vessels, Shipping registration 17w, 189w
Immobilisation of vehicles, Newham 73w
Northern line 72w, 108w
Ports, Tilbury 71-2w
Taxi fares, Greater London 226-7w
Transport of radioactive materials, Sea transport 189w

North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
see NATO

North Middlesex Hospital
480

North Wales
Cancer 187w
Inter-city rail transport 356
Prisoners on remand 737
Radiotherapy 187w
Railway transport 355-6

North Yorkshire Police
730
Manpower 730

Northern Ireland
Absent voting 76w
Alternative energy 230w
Civil service agencies 106w
Coastal areas 211-2w
Electoral register 75-6w
Handicapped pupils 212-3w
Hotels 211w
Local government constituencies 106w
Teachers 212w

Northern Ireland Housing Executive
Housing construction 168w

Northern Ireland Office
Ethnic monitoring 211w
Higher civil servants 168w, 211w

Northern line
72w, 108w

Nuclear accidents
Chernobyl 180w
Emergency planning 185w

Nuclear accidents—continued
South Wales 185w

Nuclear power
146w
Research 170w
Russia 170w

Nuclear submarines
Decommissioning 240w
Radiation hazards 51-2w
Russia 50w
Scotland 51-2w

Nuclear weapons
Radioactive wastes 50w
Wales 50w

Nuclear weapons deployment
Warships 152w

Nuclear weapons tests
90w

Nurses
Career structure 148w

Nursing & Midwifery Staffs' Negotiating Council
148w

Nursing homes
Chapeltown (13:05:92) 720
Public petitions (13:05:92) 720
Residential care 217w

Nutrition labelling
Soft drinks 483

O'Brien, Mr Mike
Debates etc.
Local government finance, England (14:05:92) 764
Maiden speech (13:05:92) 684-6
Queen's speech, Economic situation (13:05:92) 684-6
Questions
Health services, Social class 82w
Legal aid, Criminal proceedings 27w

O'Brien, Mr William
Debates etc.
Local government finance, England (14:05:92) 771-2
Questions
Local government reform 617

Occupational pensions
Social security benefits rules 46w

Offensive weapons
Assaults on police 733
Robbery 732-3
Southwark 732

Office of Fair Trading
89w

Office of Gas Supply
136-7w, 496

Office of Science & Technology
173w

Office of Telecommunications
496

Office of the Chief Adjudication Officer
98-9w

Office of the President of Social Security Appeal Tribunals
see Social security appeal tribunals

Office of the Social Security Commissioners
see Social Security Commissioners

Official cars
134w
British dependent territories 55w
Costs 134w

Official engagements
90w, 172w

Official hospitality
Hong Kong 111w

Official residences
British dependent territories 55w

OFGAS
see Office of Gas Supply

OFT
see Office of Fair Trading

OFTEL
see Office of Telecommunications

Olner, Mr Bill
Debates etc.
Local government finance, England (14:05:92) 762-3

Olympia & York
Company liquidations 365, 611

"On the Trail of Terror"
180w

O'Neill, Mr Martin
Questions
Armed forces, Educational qualifications 155w
Armed forces deployment, Yugoslavia 174w
Armed forces pay, Yugoslavia 174w
Armed forces recruitment, Disclosure of information 155w
Armed forces training, Thailand 153w
Arms trade, Export promotion 240w
Arms trade, Iraq 144w, 156w
Arms trade, Saudi Arabia 240w
Arms trade, South Africa 155-6w
BAOR, Antitank missiles 153w
BAOR, Rapier missiles 153w
Cyprus, Peace keeping operations 191w
Defence equipment 174-5w
Defence expenditure, Disclosure of information 153w, 155w
Defence Export Services Organisation 240w
Defence research 153w
Defence review 154w
Defence review, Military balance 154w
Guided weapons, Defence procurement 154w
Helicopters, Air force 152w
Helicopters, Army 152w
Military aircraft 152w
Military ceremonies, Costs 174w
NATO 175w
Navy, Defence procurement 155w
Nuclear weapons deployment, Warships 152w
Rosyth Dockyard, Manpower 153w

Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Debates etc.
Queen's speech, Environment local government & education (12:05:92) 523-6

Operation Container
19-20w

Oppenheim, Mr Phillip
Debates etc.
Local government finance, England (14:05:92) 771
Questions
Local government reform, Derbyshire 615-6

Oral questions
Foreign & Commonwealth Office 369

Orchestras
Arts finance 122w

Orimulsion
Air pollution 121w, 614-5
Padiham power station (14:05:92) 832-48
Pembroke power station 188w
Ribble Valley 614-5
Wales 121w

Ottaway, Mr Richard
Debates etc.
Queen's speech, Privatisation (11:05:92) 401-4

Out-patients
Hospital waiting lists 165-6w

Overseas aid
32w, 141-2w
Africa 31w
Developing countries 222w
Eastern Europe 32w
Expenditure 141w, 222w
Greenhouse effect 222w
Kenya 31w
Malawi 140-1w
Mozambique 370-1
Nagorno Karabakh 241w
Pollution control 221-2w
Rain forests 32w
Zimbabwe 32w

Owner occupied housing
607

Oxford Forestry Institute
International conferences 69w

Ozone
150w

Ozone layer
Air pollution control 234w

Padiham power station
Orimulsion (14:05:92) 832-48

Page, Mr Richard
Debates etc.
Queen's speech, Economic situation (13:05:92) 682-4

Paisley, Rev Ian
Debates etc.
Queen's speech (06:05:92) 91-4
Speaker's election (27:04:92) 24-5

Pan American Airways
90w

Parental responsibility
Young offenders 740

Parent's Charter
64-6w

Paris Club
140-1w

Parliament & government
Italy 744

Parliamentary Boundary Commission for England
see Boundary Commission for England

Parliamentary Boundary Commission for Wales
see Boundary Commission for Wales

Parliamentary constituencies
Boundary Commission for England 60w
Boundary Commission for Wales 60w
Essex 60w
Greater London 60w

Parliamentary opening
(27:04:92) 1-26

Parliamentary questions
Civil service agencies 79w
Procedure Select Committee 79w

Parole
115-6w
Terminal care 116w

Parry, Mr Robert
Questions
Business statements 751

Party conferences
Conservative Party 743

Passport Agency
see United Kingdom Passport Agency

Patents
Computer software 23w

Patnick, Mr Irvine, Lord Commissioner of the Treasury
Debates etc.
Queen's speech (06:05:92) 81
Queen's speech, Environment local government & education (12:05:92) 526

Patten, Chris
110-1w

Patten, Rt Hon John, Secretary of State for Education
Debates etc.
Queen's speech, Environment local government & education (12:05:92) 524, 533, 535, 584-8
Questions
Curriculum, Educational assessment 66-7w
Education (Schools) Act 1992 66w

Pawsey, Mr James
Debates etc.
Local government finance, England (14:05:92) 769
Queen's speech, Environment local government & education (12:05:92) 534-8, 579
Questions
Access funds 63w
City technology colleges 34-5w
City technology colleges, Finance 34w
Grant maintained schools 63-4w
National Union of Students 62-3w
Road humps 71w
Road traffic control, Local authority powers 106-7w
School discipline 65w
School discipline, Police 64w
Schools, Intimidation 62w
Social security benefits 93w
Teacher training, Teaching methods 65w
Truancy 64-5w

Pay
Agricultural workers 3w
British dependent territories 55w
Dentists 85w, 149-50w
Disability appeal tribunals 95w
Social security appeal tribunals 95w

Peace keeping operations
Cyprus 191w

Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Questions
Electoral register 736
Manufacturing industries, West Yorkshire 494

Pembroke power station
121w, (14:05:92) 832-48
Orimulsion 188w

Pembrokeshire
Unemployment 38w

Pendry, Mr Tom
Questions
Sports facilities, Rate rebates 608
Touting, FA Cup Final 61w
Touting, Football 21w

Pension funds
British International Helicopters 96w
Investment 140w
Maxwell companies 46w, 90-1w, 95w, 223w, 366

Pensioners
Concessionary television licences 172-3w
Maxwell companies 140w

Performance indicators
Forensic Science Service 207w
United Kingdom Passport Agency 207-8w

Petroleum production
4w

Pickthall, Mr Colin
Debates etc.
Maiden speech (13:05:92) 686-9
Queen's speech, Economic situation (13:05:92) 686-9

Pike, Mr Peter L
Debates etc.
Padiham power station, Orimulsion (14:05:92) 832-8, 843, 847
Questions
City challenge, Burnley 612

Pilkington Communications
361

Pittenweem Harbour Order Confirmation Bill 1992/93
Debates etc.
1R (13:05:92) 601

Planning authorities
Town & country planning 15w

Planning permission
Dewsbury 12w
Extractive industries 195w
Transport & Works Act 1992 73-4w
Wales 37w
Waste disposal 12w

Point of Ayr
Coal liquefaction 146w

Poland
Visas 53-4w, 203w

Police
734, 739-40
Criminal investigation 738-9
Ethnic minorities 204-5w
Finance 744
Inspections 739
Local authorities 116w
School discipline 64w
Terrorism 60w

Police authorities
103w

Police civilians
201w

Police Complaints Authority
Complaints against police 204w
Dover Harbour Police 204w
Tilbury 204w

Police custody
Greater Manchester 116-8w, 200w
Prison population 116-8w, 200w
Prisoners 19-20w

Police powers
Stop & search 733

Polling stations
Access to buildings 737

Pollutants
Industrial production 199-200w

Pollution
Liability 138w
Mining 138w

Pollution control
Christchurch 614
Concrete 614
Overseas aid 221-2w

Pollution Inspectorate
see HM Inspectorate of Pollution

Pollution monitoring
Exhaust emissions 237-8w

Polychlorinated biphenyl
Pontypool 219w
Wales 67w
Waste management 67w

Pontypool
Polychlorinated biphenyl 219w

Pope, Mr Greg
Debates etc.
Padiham power station, Orimulsion (14:05:92) 833

Population
84-5w

Porous asphalt
(15:05:92) 912-8

Porter, Mr Barry
Debates etc.
Finance Bill, Ways & means res (14:05:92) 788
Speaker's election (27:04:92) 14

Porter, Mr David
Debates etc.
Queen's speech, Public expenditure (07:05:92) 201-4
Questions
British International Helicopters, Maxwell, Robert 74-5w
British International Helicopters, Pension funds 96w
British Rail, External financing limits 7w
Educational records, Schools 65w
Flats over shops initiative, Government grants to local authorities 7-8w
Maxwell companies, Pension funds 95w
Nuclear power 146w
Sizewell C, Construction 145w
Town & country planning, Planning authorities 15w

Portillo, Rt Hon Michael, Chief Secretary to the Treasury
Debates etc.
Queen's speech, Public expenditure (07:05:92) 163-9
Questions
Industrial investment 77w
Public expenditure 78w

Ports
Tilbury 71-2w

Postage stamps
World War II 143w

Powell, Mr Ray
Debates etc.
Oral questions, Points of order (11:05:92) 373
Queen's speech, Public expenditure (07:05:92) 244
Questions
Health service staff, Contracts of employment 83w
Unemployment, Wales 35w

Powell, Mr William
Debates etc.
Queen's speech (06:05:92) 116-22
Questions
A13, Road works 107w

Prentice, Mrs Bridget
Debates etc.
Maiden speech (07:05:92) 199-201
Queen's speech (07:05:92) 199-201

Prentice, Mr Gordon
Debates etc.
Maiden speech (13:05:92) 689-91
Queen's speech, Economic situation (13:05:92) 689-91

Prescott, Mr John
Debates etc.
Olympia & York, Points of order (15:05:92) 868-9
Queen's speech, Privatisation (11:05:92) 378, 382-94, 396, 455

Prescriptions
Costs 31w
Diabetes 213w

Preventive medicine
Family doctors 486-7

Prices
Compact discs 231w

Primarolo, Ms Dawn
Questions
Recycling, Local authorities 126w
Victim support schemes, Finance 740-1

Primary education
Educational assessment 34w

Prime Minister
Clergy 22w

Priority routes
(15:05:92) 849-910

Prison accommodation
203w

Prison education services
731-2
Expenditure 731
Feltham Young Offenders Institution 731-2

Prison population
200w
Police custody 116-8w, 200w

Prisoners
Police custody 19-20w
Scotland 157-61w
Self-mutilation 157-9w
Suicide 159-61w

Prisoners on remand
North Wales 737
Transport 737
Young offenders 737-8

Private Members' time
House of Commons division of time (07:05:92) 162

Private rented housing
130w

Private sector
Commonwealth of Independent States 369

Private sector housing
Empty housing 612
Rents to mortgages scheme 607

Privatisation
British Coal Corporation 146w, 231-2w
British Rail 356
British Technology Group 10w
Forestry Commission 162w
Queen's speech (11:05:92) 374-466
Trust ports 71-2w

Procedure Select Committee
Parliamentary questions 79w

Procurators Fiscal
Manpower 92-3w

Project Al Yamamah
Audit 91w
Defence Export Services Organisation 89w
Westland Helicopters 91w

Prosecutions
Sunday trading 22w

Public access
743

Public appointments
Animal Procedures Committee 206w
HM Inspectorate of Schools 66w
Sports Council for England 173w
United Kingdom Sports Commission 173w

Public expenditure
78w
Queen's speech (07:05:92) 163-265

Public houses
Landlord & tenant 87w, 116w

Public interest
Evidence 177w

Public participation
NHS trusts 743

Public petitions
Nursing homes (13:05:92) 720

Public sector housing sales
Flats 606

Queen's speech
(06:05:92) 50-2, 57-144
Addresses to the Crown (06:05:92) 53-7
Economic situation (13:05:92) 621-719
Education (12:05:92) 500-92
Environmental policy (12:05:92) 500-92
Foreign policy (08:05:92) 276-96, 307-46
Privatisation (11:05:92) 374-466

Queen's speech—continued
Public expenditure (07:05:92) 163-265

Quin, Ms Joyce
Questions
Compact discs, Prices 231w
EC Committee of the Regions 21w

Radiation hazards
604
Nuclear submarines 51-2w
United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority 23w

Radio Authority
172w

Radio broadcasting licences
172w

Radioactive fallout
Agricultural land 180w

Radioactive materials
50w

Radioactive waste disposal
139w
Broomfield Hospital 235w

Radioactive wastes
Nuclear weapons 50w
Road construction 190w

Radioactivity
Information 170w
Sheep 187-8w
Wales 187-8w

Radiotherapy
North Wales 187w

Radon gas
Housing 135w

"Radon in Dwellings in England"
135w

Railway industry
Wales 356

Railway network
Channel tunnel 108w

Railway signals
107w

Railway transport
EC law 107w
North Wales 355-6

Railway travel
Holyhead 356

Rain forests
Overseas aid 32w

Randall, Mr Stuart
Questions
Police powers, Stop & search 733

Rape
Marriage 202w

Rapier missiles
BAOR 153w

Rate rebates
Sports facilities 608

Rawtenstall
Dept of Social Security local offices 220w

Raynsford, Mr Nick
Questions
Mortgage defaulters 238-9w

Recognition of states
Macedonia 190w

Recruitment
Special constables 202w

Recruitment & Assessment Services Agency
76-7w, 80w

Recycling
Chelmsford 126w
Domestic wastes 186-7w, 198-9w

Recycling—continued
Local authorities 126w
Local government functions 195w
National parks 196w
Wales 186-7w

Redmond, Mr Martin
Questions
NHS trusts 213w
Out-patients, Hospital waiting lists 165-6w

Redwood, Mr John, Minister for Local Government and Inner Cities
Questions
Community charge, Administrative costs 128w
County Hall 127w
Local government reform 130w
Local government revenue, Capital investment 127w
Non-domestic rates, Hammersmith & Fulham 603
Urban Regeneration Agency 12w, 125w, 128-9w

Refrigeration
Meat 30w

Regional enterprise grants
23-4w

Regional health authorities
485-6

Regional planning & development
South East region 198w, 610-1

Remand in custody
Young offenders 203-4w

Renewable Energy Advisory Group
139w

Rent arrears
Council house rents 607

Rented housing
607
Housing construction 745

Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Debates etc.
Queen's speech, Economic situation (13:05:92) 642-5

Rents to mortgages scheme
56w, 128w, (12:05:92) 500-92, 606-7
Flats 156w
Private sector housing 607
Publicity 156w
Scotland 156w, 225-6w

Repossession orders
Mortgage defaulters 27w

Reptiles
Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species 235w
Nature conservation 196-7w

Republic of Ireland
Transport 218w
Wales 218w

Research finance
Alternative energy 169w

Residential care
Elderly 217w
Income support 224-5w
Inquiries 218w
Local government functions 31w
Nursing homes 217w

Residential Homes Staffing Inquiry
218w

Resolve
Upper Waiting Hall 84w

Respite care
213-4w, 223-4w

Restrictive covenants
Vacant land 27w

Retail price index
Council tax 225w

Retail Prices Index Advisory Committee
225w

Retirement age
EC countries 48-9w

Retirement pensions
Social security benefits uprating 184w

Ribble Valley
Orimulsion 614-5

Richards, Mr Rod
Questions
Community charge capping, Wales 188w
Curriculum, Educational assessment 67-8w
Further & Higher Education Act 1992, Wales 35-6w
Pilkington Communications 361

Riddick, Mr Graham
Debates etc.
Queen's speech, Economic situation (13:05:92) 624
Questions
Dalai Lama 209w
Empty housing, Council housing 611-2
United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority, Monopolies & Mergers Commission 144-5w

Right of repair
Council housing 127w

River Calder
Sewage 602

River Doe Lea
River pollution 603

River Humber
Sewage 602

River pollution
River Doe Lea 603

River Wye
75w

RMS St Helena
68w

RNSD Eaglescliffe
49w

Road accidents
Casualties 72-4w

Road construction
Construction materials (15:05:92) 912-8
M1-M62 link 72w, 227-9w
M66 73w
M80 156-7w
Motorways 229-30w
Radioactive wastes 190w
Stockport bypass 72w

Road finance
Essex 72w

Road Haulage Association
71w

Road humps
71w, 75w, 106-7w, (15:05:92) 849-910

Road safety
(15:05:92) 849-910
M1-M62 link 16w
M4 75w

Road tax
Handicapped 1w

Road tolls
Severn bridge (06:05:92) 145-60

Road traffic
Greater London 201w

Road traffic control
Local authority powers 106-7w

Road works
A13 107w
A21 227w

Roads
Manchester 17w
Sheffield 17w

Robbery
Offensive weapons 732-3

Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn, Minister of State for Wales
Debates etc.
Education, Mid Glamorgan (12:05:92) 597-600
Questions
Areas of outstanding natural beauty, Wales 218-9w
British Rail, Privatisation 356
Bus services, Tredegar 363
Coastal protection, Wales 121w
Countryside, Wales 186w
Education, Wales 36w
Employment opportunities, Gwynedd 35w
Environment Week, Wales 38w
Estuaries, Nature conservation 120w
Further & Higher Education Act 1992, Wales 35-6w
Inter-city rail transport, North Wales 356
Railway transport, North Wales 355-6
Railway travel, Holyhead 356
Transport, Republic of Ireland 218w
Unemployment, Wales 362-3
Village halls, Government grants 120w
Welsh language, Student loans 186w

Robinson, Mr Peter
Questions
Local government constituencies, Northern Ireland 106w

Roche, Mrs Barbara
Debates etc.
Maiden speech (07:05:92) 207-8
Queen's speech (07:05:92) 207-8
Questions
Accident & emergency departments, Haringey 480

Roe, Mrs Marion
Questions
Airport & Airspace Capacity Working Group 188-9w

Rogers, Mr Allan
Debates etc.
Education, Mid Glamorgan (12:05:92) 593-7, 598, 600

Ross, Mr William
Debates etc.
Finance Bill, Ways & means res (14:05:92) 788
Questions
Slovenia, Know-how Fund 110w

Rosyth Dockyard
Manpower 153w

Rowe, Mr Andrew
Debates etc.
Queen's speech, Privatisation (11:05:92) 386
Questions
Local government reform, Wales 358

Rowlands, Mr Ted
Debates etc.
Education, Mid Glamorgan (12:05:92) 599

Royal College of Midwives
Upper Waiting Hall 147w

Royal Parks Constabulary
204w

Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain
Upper Waiting Hall 167w

Ruddock, Ms Joan
Debates etc.
Road safety (15:05:92) 857-64, 881, 909, 910

Rural areas
Housing 235w

Russia
Nuclear power 170w
Nuclear submarines 50w

Sackville, Mr Tom, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Dept of Health
Questions
Abortion 149w
Abortion, Medical ethics 149w
Accident & emergency departments, Greater London 480
Accident & emergency departments, Haringey 480
Bolingbroke Hospital 82w
Breast feeding 148w
Cancer hazards, Electric cables 82w
Census of population 9w
Child health, Air pollution 150w
Dept of Health, Ethnic monitoring 84w
Dept of Health, Higher civil servants 83-4w
Doctors' list of patients 81w
Electoral register, British residents abroad 166w
Electoral register, Greater Manchester 166w
Family doctors, Finance 484-5
Health services 81-2w
Hospital closures 31w
London Ambulance Service 80-1w
NHS, Audit 85-6w
NHS finance 85w
NHS pensions, Civil service agencies 167w
North Middlesex Hospital 480
Out-patients, Hospital waiting lists 165-6w
Population 84-5w
Royal College of Midwives, Upper Waiting Hall 147w
Shigella sonnei, Schools 167w

Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim, Minister for Industry
Questions
Assisted areas 233w
British Technology Group, Privatisation 10w
Regional enterprise grants 23-4w
Teleworking 87w
Treaty on European Union 194w

St Helena
68w

Salmonella
Cattle 69-70w

Sanitary protection
VAT 77w

Saudi Arabia
Arms trade 240w

School crossing patrols
Greater London 205w

School discipline
65w
Police 64w

School Examinations & Assessment Council
66-8w

Schools
Cleaning services 175-6w
Educational records 65w
Intimidation 62w
Shigella sonnei 167w

Science & technology policy
173w

Scientific Procedures Inspectorate
Manpower 206w

Scotland
Absent voting 162w
Accidents 92w
Asbestosis 41w
Coastal areas 176w
Coastal protection 177w

Scotland—continued
Community charge capping 178w
Contempt of court 157w
Council house rents 41-3w
Electoral register 162w
Environmental impact assessment 178-9w
Estuaries 176w
Fatal accident inquiries 92w
Further education 92w
Nuclear submarines 51-2w
Prisoners 157-61w
Rents to mortgages scheme 156w, 225-6w
Sequestration of assets (08:05:92) 275
Sheriffs 162w
Social security appeal tribunals 184w

Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas, Minister for Social Security and Disabled People
Questions
Attendance allowance, Social security claims 100w
Disability appeal tribunals, Manpower 95w
Disability appeal tribunals, Social security benefits rules 95-7w
"Disability Handbook", HIV infection 96w
Disability living allowance, Home visits 98w
Disability living allowance, Social security claims 181-3w
Disability living allowance, Social security recipients 99w
Disability working allowance, Social security claims 181-2w
Employers' statutory sick pay scheme, Social security benefits rates 47-8w
Handicap benefits, Departmental forms 98-9w
Handicap benefits, Expenditure 97w
Handicap benefits, Publicity 97w, 99w
Handicap benefits, Research 97-8w
Handicap benefits, Social security claims 100w
Independent Living Fund 183-4w
Mobility allowance, Social security claims 101-2w
Social Fund 46-8w
Social security appeal tribunals, Pay 95w
Social Security Benefits Agency, Disability living allowance 97w

Scottish courts
Evidence 177w
Juries 161w
Manpower 162w

Scottish Law Commission
41w

Sea pollution
Beaches 125w
Coastal areas 139-40w

Sea transport
Transport of radioactive materials 189w

Secret Intelligence Service
see MI6

Secure accommodation
Young offenders 36w

Security Service
see MI5

Security vetting
Government buildings 193w

Seekers Estate Agencies
Franchising 168w

Self-mutilation
Prisoners 157-9w

Sequestration of assets
Scotland (08:05:92) 275

Serious Fraud Office
365

"Sessional Returns, 1991/92"
(12:05:92) 474-9

Severe hardship provision
45w, 94w
Social security recipients 93w

Severn bridge
Road tolls (06:05:92) 145-60

Sewage
River Calder 602
River Humber 602
Water treatment 602

Shaw, Mr David
Debates etc.
Padiham power station, Orimulsion (14:05:92) 842-3, 847
Queen's speech (06:05:92) 62
Questions
Family doctors, Budgeting 80w
Illegal immigrants 202w

Sheep
Radioactivity 187-8w

Sheerman, Mr Barry
Debates etc.
Terrorism, Intelligence services (08:05:92) 298-9, 306
Questions
Administration of justice, Expenditure 59-60w
Police 739-40
River Calder, Sewage 602
Young offenders, Custodial treatment 204w
Young offenders, Remand in custody 203-4w

Sheffield
Roads 17w

Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Debates etc.
Queen's speech, Economic situation (13:05:92) 653-8

Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian, Secretary of State for Employment
Questions
EC Labour & Social Affairs Council 151w

Sheriffs
Scotland 162w

Shersby, Mr Michael
Debates etc.
Local government finance, England (14:05:92) 762
Questions
Armed forces medical services, Armed forces pay 3w
Crown prosecutors, Codes of practice 34w
Hospital waiting lists 489-90
Severe hardship provision, Social security recipients 93w

Shigella sonnei
Schools 167w

Shipping registration
Fishing vessels 17w, 189w

Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Debates etc.
Queen's speech, Economic situation (13:05:92) 639-42, 660
Questions
Business statements 750
Subsidiarity 54w

Simpson, Mr Alan
Debates etc.
Maiden speech (13:05:92) 660-2
Queen's speech, Economic situation (13:05:92) 660-2
Questions
Cancer hazards, Electric cables 82w
Income support, Young people 94w
Social security benefits, Young people 94w
Youth training 39w

Sims, Mr Roger
Questions
NHS reform 491
Tobacco advertising 214w

Sizewell C
Construction 145w

Skinner, Mr Dennis
Debates etc.
Business questions, Points of order (07:05:92) 161
Local government finance, England (14:05:92) 770, 771
Olympia & York, Points of order (15:05:92) 849, 867-8
Queen's speech (06:05:92) 58, 65, 68, 70
Queen's speech, Economic situation (13:05:92) 630
Queen's speech, Environment local government & education (12:05:92) 505, 509
Queen's speech, Privatisation (11:05:92) 411
Queen's speech, Public expenditure (07:05:92) 166, 180, 231-45, 252
Treaty of Rome, Points of order (13:05:92) 620
Questions
Business statements 755
Concessionary television licences, Pensioners 172-3w
Developing countries, Debts 32w
Olympia & York, Company liquidations 365
River Doe Lea, River pollution 603

Slovenia
Know-how Fund 110w

Small businesses
Banks 232w

Smith, Mr Chris
Questions
Stock Exchange, Contracts for services 143w

Smith, Rt Hon John
Debates etc.
Queen's speech, Economic situation (13:05:92) 621-8, 631

Smith, Mr Llew
Debates etc.
Maiden speech (07:05:92) 224-6
Queen's speech (07:05:92) 224-6
Questions
Armed forces deployment, Channel tunnel 50w
Arms trade, Iraq 171w
Bus services, Tredegar 363
EC Environment Council 197w
Environment protection, Equipment 231w
Environment Week 13w
Environment Week, Wales 38w
Forestry, Environment protection 179w
Forestry, Wales 37-8w
Hazardous materials, Industrial health & safety 121-2w
Hazardous wastes, Imports 38w
HMS Turbulent, Fires 50-1w
Housing benefits, Government grants to local authorities 49w
Local Bus Deregulation & the Consumer 18w
Meteorological satellites, Environment 145w
Nuclear accidents, Emergency planning 185w
Nuclear submarines, Decommissioning 240w
Nuclear submarines, Radiation hazards 51-2w
Nuclear submarines, Russia 50w
Nuclear weapons, Radioactive wastes 50w
Pollution, Mining 138w
Polychlorinated biphenyl, Waste management 67w
Radioactive waste disposal, Broomfield Hospital 235w
Radioactive wastes, Road construction 190w
Transport of radioactive materials, Sea transport 189w
Trident submarines, Military ceremonies 50w
Unemployment, Building industry 220w
Water pollution, Local government functions 14w

Smith, Mr Llew—continued
Wind power, Wales 37w

Smith, Mr Tim
Debates etc.
Queen's speech, Public expenditure (07:05:92) 172, 178-83, 256
Road construction, Construction materials (15:05:92) 912-5

Smoke control areas
236w

Smoking
Health hazards 483

Smyth, Rev Martin
Debates etc.
Queen's speech (06:05:92) 68
Queen's speech, Privatisation (11:05:92) 433-5
Questions
Business statements 752

SNCF
see Societe Nationale des Chemins de Fer Francais

***Soames, Mr Nicholas**, Parliamentary Secretary for Agriculture*
Questions
Cattle, Salmonella 69-70w
Meat, Food labelling 124w
Transport of animals, Animal welfare 179w

Social class
Health services 82w

Social Fund
46-8w

Social Policy Research Unit
47w

Social Security Act 1975
Questions
40w

Social Security Advisory Committee
45w, 47w

Social security appeal tribunals
(07:05:92) 266-74
Administrative delays 184w
Kirkwall 184w
Lerwick 184w
Pay 95w
Scotland 184w

Social security benefits
93w
Training 94w
Young people 45-6w, 94w

Social Security Benefits Agency
Disability living allowance 97w

Social security benefits disqualification
Newport Gwent 40w
Unemployment benefits 40w

Social security benefits rates
Child benefit 100-2w
Employers' statutory sick pay scheme 47-8w

Social security benefits rules
Disability appeal tribunals 95-7w
Occupational pensions 46w

Social security benefits uprating
96w
Retirement pensions 184w

Social security claims
Attendance allowance 100w
Disability living allowance 181-3w
Disability working allowance 181-2w
Handicap benefits 100w
Mobility allowance 101-2w
Women 45w

Social Security Commissioners
Wales 181w

Social security recipients
Disability living allowance 99w
Severe hardship provision 93w

Social Security Select Committee
95w

Societe Nationale des Chemins de Fer Francais
108w

Soft drinks
Nutrition labelling 483

Soley, Mr Clive
Questions
Rented housing 607

South Africa
Absent voting 206w
Arms trade 155-6w

South East region
Airports 188-9w
Regional planning & development 198w, 610-1

South Essex Health Consortium
217-8w

South Glamorgan
Accident & emergency departments 37w
Hospitals 359-60

South Hams District Council
Dogs 210-1w

South Trafford
Community hospitals (13:05:92) 721-8

South Wales
Coastal erosion 362
Nuclear accidents 185w
Young offenders 36w

Southampton
Empty housing 612-3

Southend Health Authority
482

Southwark
Offensive weapons 732

***Speaker and deputies**, For rulings & statements see separate heading Speaker's rulings & statements*
Debates etc.
Addressing the Chair (06:05:92) 141, (08:05:92) 350
Amendments & new clauses (12:05:92) 500, (13:05:92) 621
Calls to order (06:05:92) 65-6, (07:05:92) 164, (11:05:92) 369, 372, (12:05:92) 586, 593, (13:05:92) 720, (14:05:92) 763
Members, House of Commons Chamber (07:05:92) 179
Members' conduct (11:05:92) 444
Members' interventions (06:05:92) 66, 70, 156, 159, (07:05:92) 165, 232, 235, (12:05:92) 599
Members' oath & affirmation (29:04:92) 39, (30:04:92) 43, (05:05:92) 45
Members' speeches (06:05:92) 142, (07:05:92) 242, (08:05:92) 276, 299, 340, (14:05:92) 838, 842
Members' speeches, Quotations (12:05:92) 488
Ministerial statements (14:05:92) 770
Non-procedural matters (27:04:92) 20, 25, (08:05:92) 286
Oral questions (11:05:92) 373
Orders & regulations motions (14:05:92) 772
Points of order (27:04:92) 25, (06:05:92) 48-9, 74, (07:05:92) 161, 165, (08:05:92) 307, (11:05:92) 370, (12:05:92) 497-9, 600, (13:05:92) 620, 630, (15:05:92) 849, 868-9, 880
Queen's speech (06:05:92) 50, 53
Speaker's election (28:04:92) 27
Supplementary questions (11:05:92) 369-70, 372, (14:05:92) 739

Speaker and deputies—continued
Ten minutes rule (12:05:92) 553
Ways & means resolutions (14:05:92) 773

Speaker's election
(27:04:92) 1-26, (28:04:92) 27

Speaker's rulings & statements
Documents (13:05:92) 620
House of Commons debates (14:05:92) 756-7
Members' oath & affirmation (28:04:92) 28-9, 34
Sub judice (12:05:92) 494, 497-8
Ten minutes rule (11:05:92) 374, 425, (12:05:92) 500, 549, (13:05:92) 621, 672, 686

Spearing, Mr Nigel
Debates etc.
Olympia & York, Points of order (15:05:92) 868
Queen's speech, Foreign policy (08:05:92) 278, 307-8
Queen's speech, Public expenditure (07:05:92) 168
Questions
Bus services, Greater London 189w
Business statements 751
Prison education services, Expenditure 731
Regional planning & development, South East region 198w, 610-1
Treaty on European Union 24w, 190w, 206w
Treaty on European Union, European Commission 26w
Treaty on European Union, Treaty of Rome 25w

Special constables
Recruitment 202w

Special education
Teachers 212w

Speed, Mr Keith
Questions
A21, Road works 227w
Council of Europe, Visas 241w

Speed governors
(15:05:92) 849-910

***Spencer, Sir Derek**, Solicitor-General*
Questions
Acquittals, Criminal appeals 367
Coroners, Hillsborough Stadium 33w
Crown Prosecution Service, Manpower 367
Juries, Criminal proceedings 367

Spicer, Sir Jim
Debates etc.
Forestry (11:05:92) 467-9, 470
Questions
Business statements 750-1

Spicer, Mr Michael
Debates etc.
Queen's speech (06:05:92) 105, 109-13
Questions
Electoral register 118w

Spink, Dr Robert
Debates etc.
Maiden speech (11:05:92) 436-8
Olympia & York, Points of order (15:05:92) 849
Queen's speech, Privatisation (11:05:92) 436-8
Road safety (15:05:92) 885, 886-90, 894
Questions
Housing associations, Housing completions 56w
London Tilbury & Southend Line, Capital investment 107w
Road finance, Essex 72w

Sports Council for England
Public appointments 173w

Sports facilities
Charitable trusts 608
Rate rebates 608

Spring, Mr Richard
Debates etc.
Maiden speech (11:05:92) 406-8
Queen's speech, Privatisation (11:05:92) 406-8

Squatting
61w

Squire, Mr Robin, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Dept of the Environment
Questions
Local government constituencies 59w
Local government constituencies, Greater London 57-9w
Local government finance 126w
Local government revenue, Grimsby 11-3w
Sports facilities, Charitable trusts 608
Sports facilities, Rate rebates 608
Standard spending assessments 127w

Standard spending assessments
127w

State Veterinary Service
69-70w

Statistics
Agriculture 69w
Waste disposal 233w

Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Questions
Kurdistan, Elections 242w

Steen, Mr Anthony
Debates etc.
Queen's speech, Environment local government & education (12:05:92) 511, 551-3
Questions
Dogs, South Hams District Council 210-1w
Smoking, Health hazards 483
Voluntary organisations 202w

Stewart, Mr Allan, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Scottish Office
Questions
Electoral register, Scotland 162w
Environmental impact assessment, Scotland 178-9w

Stock Exchange
Contracts for services 143w

Stockport
Council housing 609

Stockport bypass
Road construction 72w

Stoke on Trent
Housing standards 132w

Stop & search
Police powers 733

Strang, Dr Gavin
Questions
AIDS, Health services 485
Hydrofluorochlorocarbons, Air pollution 604

Stratford Station
Channel tunnel 108w

Straw, Mr Jack
Debates etc.
Queen's speech, Environment local government & education (12:05:92) 530, 578-84

Streeter, Mr Gary
Questions
Estate Action, Expenditure 126w

Student grants
Further education 92w

Student loans
Welsh language 186w

Sub judice
Speaker's rulings & statements (12:05:92) 494, 497-8

Subsidiarity
54w

Suicide
Prisoners 159-61w
Young offenders 20-1w, 737-8

Sumberg, Mr David
Debates etc.
Queen's speech, Privatisation (11:05:92) 388

Sunday trading
367-8
Prosecutions 22w

Supplementary credit approvals
195-6w, 198-9w

Supply Estimates
Export Credits Guarantee Department 9-10w

Surgery
Death 481

Sweeney, Mr Walter
Questions
Industrial investment, Wales 35w
Local government reform, Wales 359

Synthetic fibres
Air pollution control 138w

Takeovers
Midland Bank 89-90w, 232w
Monopolies & Mergers Commission 146w

Tameside
Council housing 609

Tax allowances
Charitable donations 1w
Company cars 163w
Vocational training 115w

Tax harmonisation
78-9w

Tax yields
Capital gains tax 163w

Taxation
(14:05:92) 831
Multinational companies 164-5w

Taxi fares
Greater London 226-7w

Taylor, Mrs Ann
Questions
Alternative energy 230w
Environment protection 615
Nitrogen dioxide, Air pollution 236w
Nitrous oxide, Catalytic converters 13w
Noise control, Codes of practice 237w
Planning permission, Dewsbury 12w
Smoke control areas 236w
Synthetic fibres, Air pollution control 138w

Taylor, Mr Ian
Debates etc.
Queen's speech, Economic situation (13:05:92) 623
Queen's speech, Public expenditure (07:05:92) 173, 193-9, 253
Road construction, Construction materials (15:05:92) 912
Road safety (15:05:92) 856, 880-6, 889
Questions
Parole 115-6w
Trespass, Transient people 129-30w

Taylor, Rt Hon John David
Questions
Council house waiting lists, Ards 168w
Fishery protection 124-5w

Taylor, Mr John M, Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Dept
Questions
Administration of justice, Interpreters 209-10w

Taylor, Mr John M—continued
Civil proceedings, Disclosure of information 180w
Crown courts, Yorkshire & Humberside 26w
Klebeck, Kurt, War crimes 109w
Landlord & tenant, Law reform 109w
Legal aid, Criminal proceedings 27w
Legal aid, Expenditure 210w
Lockerbie, Bombings 180w
Lord Chancellor's Dept, Clergy 26w
Mortgage defaulters, Repossession orders 27w
Restrictive covenants, Vacant land 27w
Social Security Commissioners, Wales 181w

Taylor, Mr Matthew
Debates etc.
Queen's speech, Public expenditure (07:05:92) 190-3

Taylor, Sir Teddy
Debates etc.
Queen's speech, Privatisation (11:05:92) 381
Questions
Lockerbie, Bombings 177w
Lockerbie, Criminal investigation 193-4w
Sunday trading, Prosecutions 22w

Taylor Inquiry
see Hillsborough Stadium Inquiry

TDG
144w

Teacher training
Teaching methods 65w

Teachers
Handicapped pupils 212w
Manpower 66w
Northern Ireland 212w
Special education 212w

Teaching methods
Teacher training 65w

Technical education
Curriculum 175w

Technology & Development Group
see TDG

Telephones
Chelmsford bypass 74w

Teleworking
87w

Temple-Morris, Mr Peter
Questions
Common agricultural policy, EC reform 103w

Ten minutes rule
Speaker's rulings & statements (11:05:92) 374, 425, (12:05:92) 500, 549, (13:05:92) 621, 672, 686

Terminal care
Parole 116w

Terrorism
493
Intelligence services (08:05:92) 297-306
Ministerial statements (08:05:92) 297-306
Police 60w

Textile industry
496

Thailand
Armed forces training 153w

Thompson, Sir Donald
Questions
Defective housing, Council housing 606

Thompson, Mr Patrick
Questions
Rents to mortgages scheme 128w

Thurnham, Mr Peter
Debates etc.
Queen's speech, Privatisation (11:05:92) 385
Questions
Railway travel, Holyhead 356

Thurnham, Mr Peter—continued
Regional enterprise grants 23-4w
Restrictive covenants, Vacant land 27w

Tilbury
Police Complaints Authority 204w
Ports 71-2w

Tipping, Mr Paddy
Debates etc.
Maiden speech (11:05:92) 446-8
Queen's speech, Privatisation (11:05:92) 446-8

Tipping of waste
Leicester 13w
Methane 131-2w

TMG Engineering
144w

Tobacco
Common agricultural policy 123w
EC countries 84w

Tobacco advertising
30w, 214w, 484, 491
EC action 167w

Top Salaries Review Body
Members' secretaries 39w

Touting
FA Cup Final 61w
Football 21w

Town & country planning
133w
Planning authorities 15w

Town & Country Planning General Regulations 1976
Questions
15w

Townend, Mr John
Debates etc.
Queen's speech, Economic situation (13:05:92) 622
Questions
Business statements 753
Civil service agencies, Driving licences 106w

Townsend, Mr Cyril D
Debates etc.
Queen's speech, Foreign policy (08:05:92) 282, 319-22
Terrorism, Intelligence services (08:05:92) 304

Trading standards departments
87-8w

Training
Finance 742-3
Social security benefits 94w
Wales 364

Training & enterprise councils
Enterprise allowance scheme 221w

Trains
Channel tunnel 108w

Transfer & automated registration of uncertificated stock
143w

Transient people
Trespass 129-30w, 200w

Transplant surgery
Davies, Laura 488, 490-2

Transport
Expenditure 230w
Prisoners on remand 737
Republic of Ireland 218w

Transport & Works Act 1992
Questions
Planning permission 73-4w

Transport of animals
Animal welfare 179w

Transport of radioactive materials
Sea transport 189w

Treasury
Ethnic monitoring 77w
Higher civil servants 76-7w

Treaty of Rome
25w, 78-9w
Treaty on European Union 25w

Treaty on European Union
24-5w, 78-9w, 111w, 115w, (07:05:92) 162, 190w, 194w, 206w, 242w
EC law 165w
Economic & monetary union 112-4w
European Commission 26w
European Parliament 53w
Treaty of Rome 25w

Tredegar
Bus services 363

Tredinnick, Mr David
Questions
Bulgaria, Know-how Fund 369-70

Trespass
Transient people 129-30w, 200w

Trident submarines
Military ceremonies 50w

Trotter, Mr Neville
Questions
Fish conservation, EC law 70-1w
Resolve, Upper Waiting Hall 84w

Truancy
64-5w

Trust ports
Privatisation 71-2w

Twinn, Dr Ian
Questions
Genetically modified organisms, EC law 134w
Radon gas, Housing 135w
Waste management 135w

Tyler, Mr Paul
Debates etc.
Queen's speech (06:05:92) 135-7
Questions
Hedges & ditches, Nature conservation 235-6w
Housing, Rural areas 235w

UK contributions
European Movement 53w
International Fund for Agricultural Development 141w

UK Sports Commission
see United Kingdom Sports Commission

UN
see United Nations

UN Conference on Environment & Development
56w, 104w, 142w, 171w, 197w, 492
Family planning 68-9w
USA 604

UN Economic Commission for Europe
191w

UN Special Commission on Iraq
89w, 191-2w

Unemployment
40w
Building industry 220w
Pembrokeshire 38w
Wales 35w, 220w, 361-3

Unemployment benefits
Social security benefits disqualification 40w

Uniforms
Diplomatic service 110w
Hong Kong 110-1w

United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority
Monopolies & Mergers Commission 144-5w
Radiation hazards 23w

United Kingdom NIREX
139w

United Kingdom Passport Agency
Performance indicators 207-8w

United Kingdom Sports Commission
Public appointments 173w

United Nations
26w, 110w, 191w

Upper Waiting Hall
Resolve 84w
Royal College of Midwives 147w
Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain 167w

Urban Regeneration Agency
12w, 90w, 125w, 128-9w, (12:05:92) 500-92
Accountability 618
Land acquisition 618

USA
Foreign trade 88w
UN Conference on Environment & Development 604

Vacant land
Restrictive covenants 27w

Vaccination
Measles 487
Whooping cough 487

VAT
Aids for handicapped 163-4w
Sanitary protection 77w

Vauxhall
Government buildings 193w

Vaz, Mr Keith
Debates etc.
Queen's speech, Economic situation (13:05:92) 631, 697-701
Questions
Bank of Credit & Commerce International 23w
Bank of Credit & Commerce International, Abu Dhabi 26w, 193w
Bank of Credit & Commerce International, Bank of England 225w
Bank of Credit & Commerce International, Compensation 23w
Bank of Credit & Commerce International Inquiry, Ministers 225w
Council house sales, Local government revenue 608
Crown Prosecution Service, Manpower 367
Immigration applications, Members 19w
Kenya, Overseas aid 31w
Tipping of waste, Leicester 13w

Victim Support
see National Council of Victim Support

Victim support schemes
201w
Finance 740-1

Vietnamese refugees
111-2w

Viggers, Mr Peter
Debates etc.
Queen's speech, Public expenditure (07:05:92) 214-5, 220-4
Questions
Public houses, Landlord & tenant 87w
Seekers Estate Agencies, Franchising 168w

Village halls
Government grants 120w
Wales 120w

Visas
Council of Europe 241w
Poland 53-4w, 203w

Vocational training
Tax allowances 115w

Voluntary organisations
202w

Waldegrave, Rt Hon William, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster
Debates etc.
Queen's speech, Privatisation (11:05:92) 374-82, 383, 389
Questions
Myalgic encephalomyelitis, Medical research 173w
Science & technology policy 173w

Walden, Mr George
Debates etc.
Queen's speech, Environment local government & education (12:05:92) 545-9

Wales
Areas of outstanding natural beauty 218-9w
Coastal areas 218w
Coastal protection 121w
Community charge capping 188w
Countryside 186w
Curriculum 67-8w
Education 36w
Employment level 364-5
Environment Week 38w
Environmental impact assessment 120w
Estuaries 120w
Foreign investment in UK 363-4
Forestry 37-8w
Further & Higher Education Act 1992 35-6w
Hazardous wastes 38w
Industrial health & safety 121-2w
Industrial investment 35w, 219w
Local government reform 35w, 119w, 356-9
Local government revenue 36w
Mental patients 119w
Microelectronics industry 361
NHS finance 360
NHS trusts 36w
Nuclear weapons 50w
Orimulsion 121w
Planning permission 37w
Polychlorinated biphenyl 67w
Radioactivity 187-8w
Railway industry 356
Recycling 186-7w
Republic of Ireland 218w
Social Security Commissioners 181w
Training 364
Unemployment 35w, 220w, 361-3
Village halls 120w
Wind power 37w
Youth employment 187w
Youth training 186w

Walker, Mr Bill
Questions
Bankruptcy (Scotland) Act 1985, Departmental responsibilities 2w
Community charge capping, Scotland 178w
Council house rents, Scotland 41-3w
Scotland 743-4

Walker, Mr A Cecil
Debates etc.
Queen's speech, Environment local government & education (12:05:92) 549-51

Wallace, Mr James
Debates etc.
Speaker's election (27:04:92) 3, 5
Questions
Dentists, Pay 149-50w
Social security appeal tribunals, Administrative delays 184w
Social security appeal tribunals, Kirkwall 184w

Walley, Ms Joan
Questions
Arms trade, Indonesia 173-4w
Defence Export Services Organisation, Indonesia 174w

Walley, Ms Joan—continued
Housing standards, Newcastle-under-Lyme 132w

War crimes
200w
Channel Islands 22w, 106w, 118w
Klebeck, Kurt 33-4w, 105-6w, 109w, 118w

Wardle, Mr Charles, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Home Office
Questions
Animal Procedures Committee, Public appointments 206w
Assaults on police, Offensive weapons 733
Benton, Anthony 18w
Burglary, Greater London 202w
Dogs, South Hams District Council 210-1w
Illegal immigrants 202w
Immigration applications, Members 19w, 206w
Metropolitan Police 201w
North Yorkshire Police 730
North Yorkshire Police, Manpower 730
Police, Ethnic minorities 204-5w
Police, Local authorities 116w
Police civilians 201w
Police Complaints Authority, Dover Harbour Police 204w
Police Complaints Authority, Tilbury 204w
Police powers, Stop & search 733
Public houses, Landlord & tenant 116w
Road traffic, Greater London 201w
Robbery, Offensive weapons 732-3
School crossing patrols, Greater London 205w
Scientific Procedures Inspectorate, Manpower 206w
Special constables, Recruitment 202w
Touting, FA Cup Final 61w
Touting, Football 21w
Trespass, Transient people 200w
Visas, Poland 203w

Wareing, Mr Robert N
Questions
Absent voting, South Africa 206w
Coroners, Hillsborough Stadium 33w
Defective housing, Housing investment programmes 605
NHS trusts, Public participation 743
VAT, Aids for handicapped 163-4w

Warships
Nuclear weapons deployment 152w

Waste disposal
Planning permission 12w
Statistics 233w

Waste management
135w
Polychlorinated biphenyl 67w

Water charges
Income support 140w

Water pollution
125-6w
Local government functions 14w

Water treatment
Sewage 602

Watts, Mr John
Questions
Young offenders, Habitual offenders 738

WE 177 nuclear bomb
154w

Weapons
Iraq 191-2w

Welsh Development Agency
219w
Building repairs 120w
Information technology 219w
Labour turnover 219w

Welsh language
Student loans 186w

Welsh Office
38w
Environment protection 37-8w

Welsh Office—continued
Ethnic monitoring 184-5w
Higher civil servants 185w

West Germany
Exchange rates 113w

West Yorkshire
Housing 236w
Manufacturing industries 494

Westland Helicopters
Project Al Yamamah 91w

Whales
171w
Nature conservation 123w

Wheeler, Sir John
Debates etc.
Terrorism, Intelligence services (08:05:92) 301
Questions
Administration of justice, Interpreters 209-10w
Forensic Science Service, Performance indicators 207w
Police, Inspections 739
United Kingdom Passport Agency, Performance indicators 207-8w

Whittingdale, Mr John
Questions
Midland Bank, Takeovers 89-90w

Whittington Hospital
480

Whooping cough
Vaccination 487

Wicks, Mr Malcolm
Debates etc.
Maiden speech (13:05:92) 695-7
Queen's speech, Economic situation (13:05:92) 695-7
Questions
Urban Regeneration Agency, Accountability 618

Widdecombe, Miss Ann, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Dept of Social Security
Debates etc.
Queen's speech, Public expenditure (07:05:92) 256
Questions
British International Helicopters, Pension funds 96w
Maxwell companies, Pension funds 46w, 95w, 223w
Maxwell companies, Pensioners 140w
Pension funds, Investment 140w
Retirement age, EC countries 48-9w
Retirement pensions, Social security benefits uprating 184w
Social security benefits uprating 96w

Widows
Child support 44-6w

Wigley, Mr Dafydd
Debates etc.
Queen's speech (06:05:92) 99-103
Questions
Devolution 495
Local government reform, Wales 358

Wildlife Link
179w

Wilkinson, Mr John
Questions
Robbery, Offensive weapons 732-3

Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Questions
Boundary Commission for Wales, Parliamentary constituencies 60w
Llwyncelyn community home 121w
Training & enterprise councils, Enterprise allowance scheme 221w

Williams, Mr Alan W
Questions
Cabinet committees 105w
Carbon dioxide 171w
Carbon dioxide, Air pollution control 132w
NHS trusts, Wales 36w

Wilshire, Mr David
Debates etc.
Queen's speech, Public expenditure (07:05:92) 226-31

Wilson, Mr Brian
Debates etc.
Queen's speech, Economic situation (13:05:92) 671

Wind power
Wales 37w

Winnick, Mr David
Debates etc.
Queen's speech (06:05:92) 65-6
Queen's speech, Environment local government & education (12:05:92) 526-9
Queen's speech, Privatisation (11:05:92) 376
Questions
Benton, Anthony 18w
Benton, Anthony, Complaints against police 33w
Business statements 754
Iran, Foreign policy 192-3w
Iraq, Human rights 192w
Iraq, Weapons 191-2w
Klebeck, Kurt, War crimes 33-4w, 105-6w
Maxwell companies, Pension funds 366
Parliamentary questions, Procedure Select Committee 79w
Retirement pensions, Social security benefits uprating 184w
War crimes 200w
War crimes, Channel Islands 22w, 106w

Winterton, Mrs Ann
Questions
Abortion 149w
Abortion, Medical ethics 149w
Breast feeding 148w
Nurses, Career structure 148w

Winterton, Mr Nicholas
Debates etc.
Queen's speech (06:05:92) 77-8
Speaker's election (27:04:92) 8
Questions
Business statements 755
NHS finance, Charitable donations 488

Wolfson, Mr Mark
Debates etc.
Queen's speech, Privatisation (11:05:92) 397, 431-3
Queen's speech, Public expenditure (07:05:92) 181, 186

Women
Family doctors 480-1
Social security claims 45w

World Commission on Culture & Development
191w

World Commission on Environment & Development
223w

World War II
Postage stamps 143w

Wright, Dr Tony
Debates etc.
Maiden speech (12:05:92) 542-4
Queen's speech, Environment local government & education (12:05:92) 542-4

Yeo, Mr Tim, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Dept of Health
Debates etc.
Community hosptials, South Trafford (13:05:92) 723-8
Questions
AIDS, Health services 485
Carers, Health surveys 213-4w
Community care 81w
Community care, Elderly 86w
Families 82-3w
Local government social services, Finance 218w
Measles, Death 86w
Measles, Vaccination 487
Mental health community care 86w
Mental health services 86w
Mentally ill, Local government social services 147-8w
Residential care, Elderly 217w
Residential care, Inquiries 218w
Residential care, Nursing homes 217w

Ynys Mon
Employment opportunities 362-3

York University
47w

Yorkshire & Humberside
Crown courts 26w

Yorkshire Water
602

Young, Sir George, Minister for Housing and Planning
Questions
Council house rents, Rent arrears 607
Council housing, Right of repair 127w
County Hall 127w
Flats, Public sector housing sales 606
Flats over shops initiative, Government grants to local authorities 7-8w
Hackney 125w
Olympia & York, Company liquidations 611
Planning permission, Dewsbury 12w
Private rented housing 130w
Regional planning & development, South East region 610-1
Rented housing 607
Rents to mortgages scheme 128w, 607
Rents to mortgages scheme, Private sector housing 607
Town & country planning 133w
Town & country planning, Planning authorities 15w

Young offenders
Crime prevention 203w
Custodial treatment 204w
Habitual offenders 738
Parental responsibility 740
Prisoners on remand 737-8
Remand in custody 203-4w
Secure accommodation 36w
South Wales 36w
Suicide 20-1w, 737-8

Young people
Income support 94w, 181w
Social security benefits 45-6w, 94w

Youth employment
Wales 187w

Youth training
39-40w, 45w, 94w
Wales 186w

Yugoslavia
Armed forces deployment 174w
Armed forces pay 174w

Zimbabwe
Overseas aid 32w

Zoo Licensing Act 1981
Questions
137w

Zoonoses Order 1989
Questions
69-70w

Zoos
137w